

JFL LEARNERS IN THE U.S.:
IDENTITY, JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

by

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(Under the Direction of Betsy Rymes)

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study of a small subset of Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students who are interested in Japanese popular culture and language, focusing on language-in-use. The purpose of this study is to understand the multiple ways contemporary Japanese culture is experienced by JFL college students who are also secret fans of anime and Japanese popular culture. In particular, this study is interested in the critical aspect of the relationship between JFL learners' experiences and its impact on their individual identities in everyday life. Informed by discourse and identity theories, this study will investigate aspects of contemporary Japanese popular culture that JFL students are attracted to and engaged in, and explore Japanese learners' social identities through multiple media and in different contexts: 1) photographs taken by participants, 2) individual photo-elicited interviews, and 3) a series of group discussions of Japanese popular culture texts. The central questions guiding the study are as follows: 1) How do JFL students narrate their identities as Japanese popular culture fans in diverse social situations? 2) How do JFL students narrate their critical stance on both Japanese and U.S. societies? By understanding how learners of Japanese construct their own identities using individual agency, and how the process is mediated by both Japanese language and popular culture texts, this study

will contribute to new and dynamic understandings of Japanese culture and JFL learning as experienced by Japanese learners in the U.S.

INDEX WORDS: Japanese as a foreign language, socio-cultural perspective in language learning, identity, agency, popular culture, discourse analysis, gender, social norms, critical stance

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I remember reading about that thinking “MAN! That’s not fair! I wanna play these too!”

SO, ALL of this is important because it eventually led to this idea that I got to around the seventh grade. I got this idea if I study Japanese and learn to read Japanese I can buy these imported video games, because, you know, you can import these video games and then I can play them even if, even if they haven’t been translated into English.

- Sean, 21-year-old male Japanese major

This is an excerpt from the interview transcript of Sean (pseudonym), a college undergraduate and a JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) learner. Sean is describing when he first read video game magazines and found that there were a lot more video games available in Japanese, since they were imported from Japan. Sean’s experience of playing Japanese video games later brought him into the community of *anime*, Japanese animation, and motivated him to learn Japanese.

Currently, I teach Japanese as a foreign language at South University in the southeastern United States, and I meet quite a few students who tell me stories about their experiences with anime. These students, who are strongly connected with Japanese animation, and wear T-shirts with anime characters such as *Sailor Moon*, *Dragon Ball Z* and *Princess Mononoke*, I call “anime students.” They are showing up with increasing frequency in U.S. classrooms, from elementary to high school and even college. In Japan, anime includes animated TV programs, animated films, and sometimes *manga* (Japanese graphic novels). U.S. undergraduate students’ perspectives on anime indicate that U.S. anime fans have a broader sense of what anime includes (Fukunaga, 2000). I noticed that their use of the word anime was not limited to animated films

and TV programs; rather, it included subcultures associated with anime. In this larger concept of anime, there are subcultures of manga, video games, anime music and other anime-related activities (see Chapter 3).

Several recent Hollywood films have drawn on Japanese popular culture. In *Kill Bill*, a form of anime was used to narrate part of the action film. *Lost in Translation* illustrates stories of two U.S. travelers who experienced Japan as a mixture of contemporary and traditional culture. A Japanese horror film, *Juon*, was made into the U.S. version, *The Grudge*. And it goes without saying that Japanese video games attract many youth throughout the world. Both anime and video games work as a hook for young students to begin exploring other Japanese popular culture texts, such as Japanese music. These social phenomena indicate that interest in contemporary Japanese popular culture is not limited to anime.

The new wave of popularity of Japanese popular culture among youth influences the current body of JFL students in the U.S., while at the same time creating some problems that must be addressed. In this chapter, I describe the framework for this study, including the background and statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, and personal background. I conclude Chapter 1 with an overview of the dissertation.

Personal Background

In a way, I am both an insider and outsider of the anime community. As a native Japanese, I have my own conception of anime because of its strong presence in Japanese popular culture; however, I am not a fan who seeks to know everything about anime. Growing up in Japan, I became a speaker and a writer of English as a second language. In kindergarten and elementary school, I became interested in learning English through popular culture, and in weekly English conversation lessons I used the target language. In middle school, two of my friends and I

belonged to an English pen-pal club. We also used to get together twice a month to watch and discuss foreign films. I will never forget the day I received a letter in English from Ke Huy Quan, a young Asian-American actor who appeared in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) and *Goonies* (1985). This experience of making contact with a U.S. cultural celebrity—a real Hollywood star—encouraged me to study English more diligently in order to use it as a communication tool. I also bought expensive movie magazines and bilingual movie scripts. By the time I became an English major in college in Japan, I had imported a caption machine and VHS tapes of my favorite movies in English. Using the caption machine from the U.S, I was able to watch movies in English with English subtitles. Since my listening skills in English were not good enough to pick up everything the actors and actresses were saying, reading the English captions helped me improve my oral comprehension speed. I was forced to resort to these measures because English education in Japan focuses mainly on teaching students to read and write, rather than to communicate orally. Interestingly, my older sister always received good grades in English classes in middle and high school, and pleased her teachers, although she never wished to use the language. For my sister, English classes were boring, and her only motive to study English was to make a good grade. On the other hand, it did not matter whether the English classes at school were boring to me because I felt a strong connection with U.S. popular culture and had a community of practice through U.S. popular movies with my friends. My own experience with English learning led me to pay attention to my students' interests in Japanese popular culture and to conduct research on popular culture and language learning.

Background of the Problem

In the 80s and early 90s, many believed that JFL students were motivated to learn Japanese by their desire for future success in the international business field. However, since I

began teaching Japanese at South University in 1999, I have met many students who started studying Japanese because of their interest in anime. These anime students reminded me of my own experience of learning English as a second language through U.S. popular culture. I was curious to see what parts of Japanese popular culture U.S. students were interested in, and how anime students view themselves as anime fans. So I began carefully observing JFL students' and teachers' attitudes towards Japanese popular culture.

At first, I did not know what to think of "anime students" when I started teaching Japanese in the U.S. I noticed that some students left doodles of anime characters on test papers and wore anime T-shirts. I was also surprised to hear some of the words students used because those words were unlikely to appear in FL textbooks. It seemed as if some students did not wish to identify themselves as "hard-core anime fans," although they really liked anime. One participant of this study, Beth, stated in an individual interview, "There are a lot of really annoying people who are just interested in anime, you know, and they think that's all Japan has to offer." Beth really liked anime and manga, although she wished to distinguish herself from anime fans who only have a narrow interest in Japanese culture.

Broadly speaking, I recognized at least four types of students in the Japanese class: "hard-core anime fans," who go to anime club meetings and wear anime T-shirts to the classroom; "secret anime fans," who indicate their anime activities in a subtle manner or hide their interest in anime in the classroom; students who openly say, "I don't watch anime" as if they were against it; and students who are indifferent toward anime. Why are secret anime fans unwilling to express their identities as anime fans in JFL classrooms? Some anime students have had experiences of being looked down on or ridiculed by other students, teachers and family members for being anime fans (Fukunaga, 2000).

I also heard some negative comments from some senior Japanese instructors, who pointed out that these anime students only learn “slang” in Japanese and do not show respect for other aspects of Japanese culture. I was strongly suspicious of this perspective because I was aware that some serious JFL students were secret anime fans. Whether these instructors were aware of secret anime fans or not, the fact remains that JFL teachers may not know much about students’ out-of-class activities. Some teachers are aware of the popularity of anime, especially for adolescents, although little formal study of the phenomenon has been conducted. As a consequence, the students’ interests in Japanese popular culture are rarely reflected in current foreign language classrooms. Even fellow college students, from both Japan and the U.S., frown upon anime students, speaking of them as, “anime geeks.” One goal of this dissertation is to investigate what makes people have such a negative, stereotypical attitude or other strong feelings toward anime students and why, even in the context of such negative peer attitudes, certain students continue to pursue their interest in Japanese popular culture.

It took about a year for me to decide to attend a weekly anime club meeting, and I still wonder why I did not feel like going to the club activity from the beginning. Perhaps, it is because of the negative perception in Japan of “anime otaku” (hard-core anime fans) as social outcasts. However, I found that the anime students who openly asked me to visit their club were not at all social outcasts. Rather, these students were very proud of their community and wanted to share with others. I began questioning my own bias toward anime fans after I visited the anime club. Does the negative connotation of “anime otaku” in Japan transfer to the U.S? Is this why some anime fans in JFL classrooms keep their interests a secret?

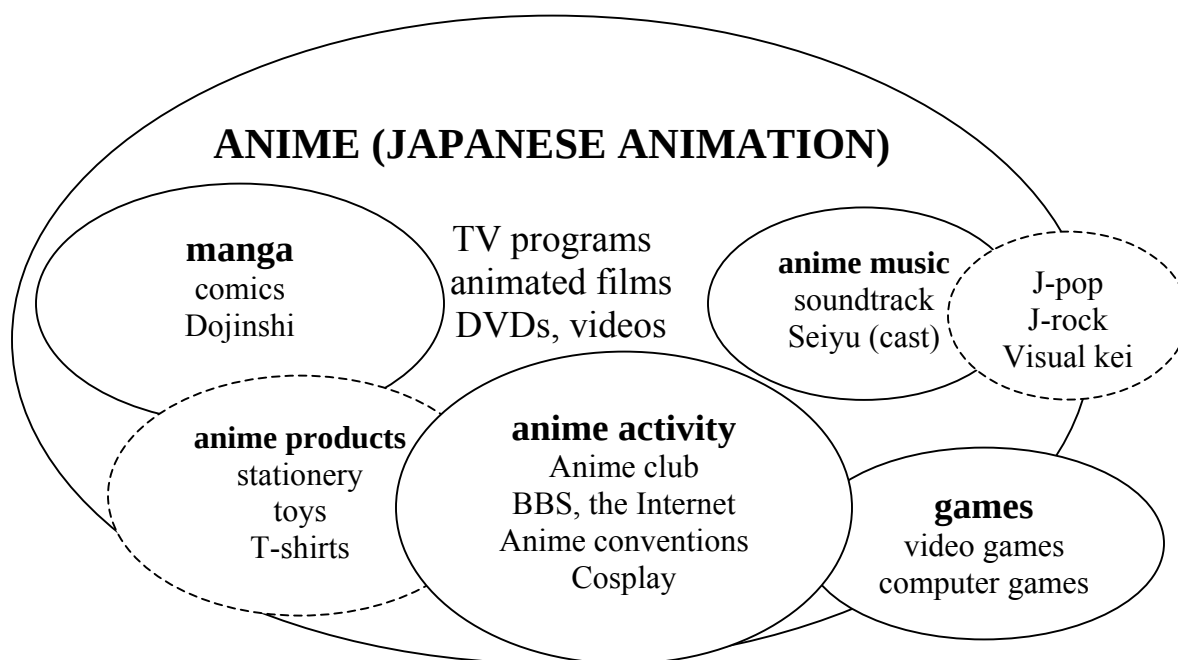
As interest in popular culture texts has grown, scholars have investigated various aspects of anime: In the field of literary studies and popular culture studies, Japanese popular culture

texts such as films and anime are discussed (Napier, 2001). In the field of sociology, anime fans' activities are discussed. In the field of literacy studies, some researchers have begun looking at popular culture texts to find out the role they play in students' social identities (Norton, 1995). Others have investigated the potential role of popular culture texts from the perspective of multiliteracies (Alvermann, 2002; New London Group, 1996). On the other hand, in the field of foreign language (FL) education, discussions of popular culture texts seldom go beyond how to use such texts in the classroom to motivate students. In order to create culturally relevant JFL classrooms, educators need to know what students' perspectives of Japanese popular culture are.

At the 2000 ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) conference, I presented findings of a study on anime students. Some K-12 JFL teachers told me that they have many anime students in their JFL classrooms. Some high schools and colleges have anime clubs, J-pop (Japanese popular music) and J-rock (Japanese rock music) clubs, and Japanese TV drama clubs. Although teachers have become aware of their students' strong interest in Japanese popular culture, little formal research has been done on the particular subcultures of anime and their fans in relation to language learning, critical stance and social identity.

In a previous study (Fukunaga, 2000), U.S. anime fans talked about anime including subcultures around anime. In the larger concept of anime, there are subcultures of manga, video games, anime music, and anime-related activities (see Figure 1). In Figure 1, solid lines indicate a strong and direct connections among subcultures of anime, while dotted lines indicate less certain or direct connection to anime.

Figure 1. U.S. college students' perspectives of anime and its subcultures



In U.S. students' perspectives, anime includes TV programs, animated films, DVDs, and videos. One anime subculture, manga, includes comics and *dojinshi*, also known as zines: small hand-made booklets written by anime fans that parody manga or anime. Nowadays, many Japanese and English *dojinshi* are available on the Internet. The "fanfics" in Chandler-Olcott and Mahar's study (2003a; 2003b) can be considered as a type of *dojinshi*. The data indicate that most of the male students enter the world of anime through playing video games from Japan. In particular, a type of video game, RPG (Role Playing Games), has many characteristics of anime. Anime-related activity seems to play an important role for some U.S. students. Anime clubs and anime conventions, in particular, help to constitute anime communities. Anime conventions provide a means to see how anime consists of subcultures such as manga, anime products, music, cosplay, video games, and animation itself. コスプレ(ko-su-pu-re), cosplay or "costume play," is dressing up in the costume of a favorite anime character, video game character and sometimes

a member of a visual kei band. Visual kei is a genre of Japanese rock (J-rock) where members, who are mostly male, dress in outrageous fashions with makeup. At big anime conventions, many cos-players wear handmade costumes and join cos-play competitions. Anime products such as stationery, toys, cards, and posters are also part of the anime subculture. Many participants talked about the strong connection between watching anime and listening to anime theme songs. Participants noted that anime fans, especially women, began listening to Japanese pop/ rock music outside of the anime circle once they learned some Japanese songs as anime theme songs.

In the field of foreign language education, some believe that female students are more successful in learning foreign language and culture than male students (Carr, 2005). From my observation of Japanese people who are studying in the U.S., it seems that Japanese women are more flexible than Japanese men in adjusting to different ways of living in the U.S. These observations make me wonder why some female students who are interested in anime and video games tend not to be open about their interests in classrooms. Is it because these secret anime fans are careful how they present themselves in order to avoid negative situations? These secret fans might have critical stance towards the society. Female students such as these, who are interested in anime and video games, are rarely discussed in academia. Furthermore, while gender issues in popular culture texts are often discussed, there is not much discussion of gender issues and social identities through fans' activities.

Statement of the Problem

Interest in aspects of Japanese contemporary popular culture such as anime, video games, and music, is growing rapidly among youth in the U.S. The growing number of JFL learners in the field of Less Commonly Taught Languages (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1997) is one

indication of popular culture's powerful influence. However, how JFL learning and anime activities influence each other, and how this connection can afford new ways of teaching and learning have not been carefully investigated. My research begins to investigate these questions from two directions.

First, previous studies of anime students focused on hard-core anime fans indicate that these fans tend to be mostly male computer enthusiasts who like anime and video games (Fukunaga, 2000; Napier, 2001). However, there are female students who are interested in anime and video games. In order to uncover different types of anime students in JFL classrooms, there is a need to investigate secret anime fans' perspectives on Japanese popular culture.

Second, there is a lack of discussion of subcultures of anime that are popular among female JFL students. A previous study I conducted (Fukunaga, 2000) indicates that female and male anime fans have different areas of interest in subcultures of anime. Visual kei, Cosplay, J-pop and J-rock music are more popular among female than male fans.

Although there are studies of particular forms of Japanese popular culture and of anime fans (Napier, 2001) in the areas of cultural studies, information technology, journalism, sociology and the new literacy studies, little information is available to understand JFL learners' perspectives on Japanese popular culture in order to improve JFL instruction. JFL teachers need to be informed about different types of popular culture in order to make culturally relevant and engaging classrooms to serve young students' needs.

Current foreign language teachers and researchers are not paying enough attention to their students' interest in Japanese popular culture; there is a disconnect between students' interest in Japanese popular culture and how culture is represented in foreign language classrooms. Some teachers negatively judge students who show strong interest in popular culture,

and only a few teacher-researchers investigate how these students are using popular culture texts (He, 2003; Lam, 2000; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003). Investigating the relationship between the JFL learners who are interested in contemporary Japanese culture and the variety of popular culture texts is important in order to cope with the demographic change—from business oriented to popular culture-oriented—in JFL learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the multiple ways contemporary Japanese culture and language learning are experienced by JFL college students who are also secret anime fans in the U.S., and to describe how U.S. students construct their social identity and critical stance through Japanese popular culture texts in different social contexts. This is a qualitative study of a small subset of college students who are interested in Japanese popular culture and language, focusing on language-in-use. This study, informed by discourse and narrative theories, will investigate aspects of contemporary Japanese popular culture that JFL students are attracted to and engaged in, and explore Japanese learners' social identities through multiple media and in different contexts: 1) photographs taken by participants; 2) individual photo-elicited interviews; and 3) a series of group discussions of Japanese popular culture texts.

The central questions guiding the study are as follows:

- 1) How do JFL students narrate their identities as Japanese popular culture fans in diverse social situations?
- 2) How do JFL students narrate their critical stance on both Japanese and U.S. societies?

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study provides insights into JFL students' perceptions of Japanese popular culture and its relation to developing social identity and critical stance. This study

contributes to several areas of educational instruction. In the field of less commonly taught languages (LCTL), this study helps to connect students' out-of-class activities with Japanese culture and their in-class activities. Teachers in language arts and other classrooms at all levels may be able to create relationships with students through an understanding of students' out-of-class activities with Japanese popular culture. This study also helps students and teachers to rethink the potential role of Japanese popular culture texts in terms of identity and gender issues, critical thinking, and negative stereotypical views of certain affinity groups. In addition, this study provides current information on Japanese popular culture in order to help build rapport between teachers and students in classrooms. In the end, understanding students' perceptions of Japanese popular culture can create new opportunities for using popular culture texts in classroom activities.

Overview

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 has developed the framework for this study. I also stated the purpose and significance of the study, and personal background. Chapter 2 is a review of recent studies on critical discourse analysis, Japanese popular culture texts, and socio-cultural perspectives focusing on identities and agency in the fields of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and less commonly taught languages (LCTL). Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this study, discourse analysis, and the process of analysis. I also provide information about three participants in the pilot study and six participants in the current study, and the content of popular culture texts that I used in discussion group meetings.

Chapters 4 through 6 provide findings and discussions of data with nine JFL learners in the U.S.: three from the pilot study and six from the current study. Chapter 4 describes JFL learners' affective stance as indicated in their stories: "being different" from white, middle-class,

social norms in the U.S. JFL students discursively distance themselves from the majority group in the U.S. Chapter 5 discusses the diversity of gender representation in Japanese popular culture texts such as visual kei and *Sailor Moon*, focusing on the concept of metrosexuality and inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005). Japanese popular culture provides students with tools to open up their identity options, to challenge social hegemony in the U.S, and to tolerate differences. Chapter 6 explores the case of a successful JFL learner, Beth, focusing on her ways of negotiating identities in her otaku narrative and the third gender narrative. Beth's meta-reflexive use of agency (Archer, 2003) is a key to becoming her own agent in given social situations. I propose a new goal for Japanese learners: becoming "Nihon otaku." Teachers can encourage JFL students to deepen their knowledge in a specific area while they help students to explore multiple aspects of Japanese culture and society. In chapter 7, as conclusions and implications, I summarize discussions in each findings chapter and return to my original research questions to summarize how my study has answered them. I also provide educational implications for classroom teachers such as how to use the knowledge of JFL students' perspectives to serve students better.

In this dissertation, I hope to emphasize the importance of social aspects of language learning that is closely connected with students' identities and the way of thinking about the world they are living in. In this text, there might be unfamiliar terms describing aspects of current Japanese popular culture, so I encourage readers to imagine what it is like for young JFL learners who are excited about discovering these types of popular culture through multiple media such as the Internet.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORY AND LITERATURE

In this chapter, I selectively review discourse and identity theories as the theoretical framework of my dissertation. First, I define discourse by reviewing discourse analytical theories. Second, I discuss three main theoretical concepts: agency and reflexivity (Archer, 2003); inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005); and affective stance (Ochs, 1996). Third, I argue the importance of socio-cultural perspectives relevant to language learning by reviewing related studies. Finally, I review previous studies of anime (Napier, 2001) concerning current issues of Japanese popular culture and JFL learning.

Discourse

Discourse as “language-in-use”

A central issue in discourse analysis is its focus on language-in-use. The relationship between “the utterance type level” and “situated meanings” (Gee, 2003) has been investigated by many researchers (Gee, 1999; Rymes, 2001; Ochs and Capps, 2001) in various fields of studies such as education, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and sociology. The development of discourse analysis has led to the hope that researchers can reveal how language-in-use is associated with social practices in particular. Furthermore, researchers have begun analyzing the relationship between social structure and social practices.

Social Norms in Discourse

Gee (1996) contributed to the interdisciplinary field of sociocultural approaches to language and literacy. He explains the notion of big D “Discourses” as “*saying (writing)–doing–being–valuing–believing combinations*” that are “always more than just language” (Gee, 1996, p. 127) while explaining “discourse” with a lowercase “d” as “connected stretches of talk or

writing” (Gee, 2001, p. 110). Gee distinguishes Discourses into primary Discourses and secondary Discourses. We are born into “primary Discourses” as our first social identity based on our home and family. Secondary Discourses are “those to which people are apprenticed as part of their socializations within various local, state, and national groups and institutions outside early home and peer-group socialization” (1996, p. 137). Gee argues that “Discourses are *mastered* through acquisition, not through learning” (p. 137). In other words, people do not master Discourses by overt instruction, but rather by participating in social practices. In a similar manner to the concept of D/discourses, Fairclough (2003) suggests the concept of orders of discourse in order to capture the network of social practices that lay beneath language use. The point of these two concepts is that there are different social norms within discourses in given situations. Understanding social norms within Discourses is essential to maintaining smooth intercultural communication.

The following is an example of Discourse that has different social norms in Japanese and U.S. societies. One of the participants of the study explained how the term *otaku* has different meanings for different people and situations in Japanese and U.S. societies. In Discourses in the U.S., *otaku* was introduced as a synonym for “anime fans”; therefore some people who liked Japanese animation identified themselves as *otaku*. In addition, some U.S. anime fans use *otaku* as a term of positive self-description, since it is “associated with Japan’s cutting-edge coolness, including the latest in gadget technologies and the growing trendiness of manga and anime fandom” (Japan Society, 2005). However, *otaku* has negative connotations such as social alienation and obsession with “kiddie porn” (Schodt, 1996, p. 45) in Discourses in the Japanese society, epitomized by Miyazaki Tsutomu’s horrific crimes in 1988 and 1989. In fact, there were some problems in the Japanese program in the U.S. where I taught when we tried to match JFL

learners and exchange students from Japan as conversation partners. There was a Japanese female exchange student who refused to meet with a particular JFL learner who introduced himself as “anime *otaku*” as an innocent joke. The exchange student avoided any contact with him after the first day. This is an extreme case where reference to *otaku* hindered the JFL learner’s learning opportunities, but it reminds us that it is important to be aware of Discourses in different societies. The word “otaku” is a noun describing a certain group of people, but it functions differently according to social factors and histories in Japan and the U.S. On one hand, saying “otaku” can create a negative view of certain people in Japan. On the other hand, the same word, uttered in the U.S. may be considered a signal of being cool as an anime fan.

Co-construction of Discourses

Discourse analysis addresses different levels of discourses, looking at language in different layers: the individual discourse level, co-constructed in interaction, and shaped by society. Co-construction of discourse is a key to uncovering the inter-relationships between agency and society.

Figure 2. Different levels of discourses

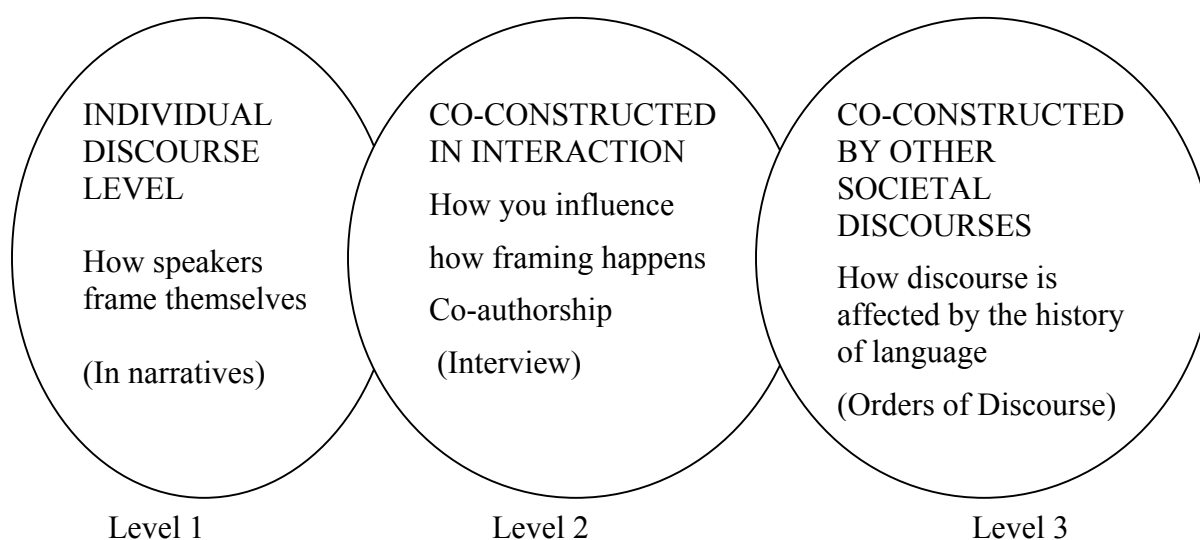


Figure 2 illustrates three levels of discourses I need to look at in order to theorize discourses. At the individual discourse level, simply looking at the use of language by individuals illustrates their inhabitable identities. At level 2, how individuals frame their identities is co-constructed by others who join the discourse. In my study, JFL students co-constructed their identities through talk with a researcher who has a different social/cultural background. A discourse analyst needs to consider the co-authorship of the discourse produced in the interview. It is necessary to analyze the relationship between the discourses the analyst finds in levels 1 and 2 and social discourses in level 3. In order to uncover social structure and power issues in the society, micro-analysis of discourse should be understood in the context of macro-analysis of social discourses (Blommaert, 2005). Understanding that discourse is co-constructed by other social discourses, I pay extra attention to different orders of discourse in Japanese and U.S. societies in my study.

In my dissertation, I apply this theoretical frame to three levels of discourses: individual, co-constructed in interaction, and shaped by society based on social norms in discourse. First, at the individual discourse level, I pay attention to how the form of language functions in given situations. Secondly, discourse is co-constructed in interaction between the JFL student and the researcher in the research interview, and it changes depending on the relationship between the two. Third, I analyze the function of the discourse in order to reveal the social structure and power relationship in the society considering the history and social norms.

Discourse and Identity theories

The study of identity has become an important aspect of educational research. In contrast to the objective view of identity, many recent studies of identity have focused on the poststructuralists' view of "constructed/ situated identities." Identities are "built, constructed, with the discursive resources which are our birthright, our 'mother tongues,' but also with other,

competing discourses of street, school, and workplace” (Collins & Blot, 2003, p. 119). My understanding of identity takes some aspect of the poststructuralist view of “shifting identities.” However, I do not attempt to answer the question of whether or not there is a “core self” in human beings. Rather, I focus on the shifting and multiple natures of identity in different social situations. In this section, I review studies relevant to identity and agency, focusing on theoretical concepts of inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005), agency and reflexivity (Archer, 2000, 2003), and affective/epistemic stance (Ochs, 1996).

Inhabitable/ascriptive identities

Individual agency has a great influence on how identities are shaped and recognized in given social contexts. I understand individual agency as one’s personal control and effort to be recognized as having a certain identity in given situations through social interaction. Individuals choose to present or not to present themselves in certain ways using their individual agency in given situations. However, there are some cases when the effort of using individual agency might not be recognized by others depending on the social contexts. This situation creates a gap between the way individuals present themselves and the way they look to others. The concept of inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) is useful to understand this situation. Inhabitable identity is the identity within which the subject seeks him-/herself, while ascriptive identity is the way the subject looks to others. Thus, there is often a gap between inhabitable and ascriptive identities. How does individual agency operate in order to increase the chance for inhabitable identities to be recognized by others?

Meta-reflexivity

A social theorist, Archer (2001, 2003) takes on the difficult task of providing a new way of looking at individual agency based on analytical dualism. Analytical dualism considers that

the process of agency can be influenced by individual power focusing on internal conversation while “structural and cultural powers impinge upon agents” (Archer, 2003, p. 3). The process is not one-way, from structure to agency; instead, it is reciprocal. Archer believes that the internal conversation is the key to understanding the agency negotiation process. The internal conversation is “a mechanism linking agency to social structure (and vice versa)” (Archer, 2003, p. 64). Archer challenges the poststructuralists’ view that individual social identities are entirely constructed by social structures beyond their control: “Everyone is a reflexive being. This means that we deliberate about our circumstances in relation to ourselves and, in the light of these deliberations, we determine our own personal courses of action in society” (Archer, 2003, p. 167). In other words, reflecting on our actions plays “a crucial role in mediating between structure and agency” (Archer, 2003, p. 14).

Archer suggests three modes of reflexivity “autonomous, communicative, and meta-reflexives” as a tool to analyze how individuals use their internal conversation to frame themselves in a certain way. Individuals who use autonomous reflexivity tend to be confident in the outcomes of lone inner conversations, while individuals who use communicative reflexivity need to use external consultation to complete their inner deliberations. On the other hand, meta-reflexives are the people who are “reflexive about [their] own acts of reflexivity” (p. 255). In other words, meta-reflexives use “self-monitoring” and tend to “withdraw into self-interrogation” (Archer, 2003, p. 256). Meta-reflexive individuals are more aware of their surroundings than autonomous or communicative reflexives and use their past experiences and prior knowledge strategically when negotiating their agency in given situations.

Affective/epistemic stance

The definition of social identity that I use in my study is suggested by Ochs (1996): “Social identity encompasses all dimensions of social personae” (p. 410) including participant roles, positions, relationships, reputations, group identity, and rank, as well as seven situational dimensions: time, space, affective stance, epistemic stance, social identity, social acts, and social activities (Ochs, 1996). From this broad perspective, social identity is not just one simple social role or activity. It is rather a combination of complex multiple social dimensions. For this particular group of students in my study, social identity is first of all, their role as college students. They are students who are learning JFL in the U.S. They are also individuals who are interested in Japanese popular culture (JPC). These students all grew up in white, middle-class families in the United States. The question is how do these students display their social identity as JFL students in their discursive practices in the given time and situation of the research interview and their discussion group meetings?

Ochs proposes that affective and epistemic stances are “central meaning components of social acts and social identities and that linguistic structures that index epistemic and affective stances are the basic linguistic resources for constructing/realizing social acts and social identities” (Ochs, 1996, pp. 419-420). Affective stance includes a mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition, degrees of emotional intensity and concern (Ochs, 1996). Affective stance is linguistically indexed in quantifiers, emphatic stress, phonological lengthening, interjections, laughter, and repetition. On the other hand, epistemic stance “refers to knowledge or belief” (1996, p. 410). I understand that it is important to investigate how the forms, the linguistic structures, function to display participants’ social identities through linguistic indexing such as affective/epistemic stances in given situations.

In my dissertation, I combine these theoretical concepts of inhabitable/ascriptive identities, meta-reflexivity, and affective/epistemic stance in order to uncover ways of negotiating identities of JFL learners and secret popular culture fans.

Socio-cultural Perspectives Relevant to Language Learning

Investment

Norton (1995, 2000) presents an important discussion of language learners' motivation and identity with her study of five immigrant women in the U.S. Norton argues that the conception of motivation that previous SLA (Second Language Acquisition) theories of natural language learning provide does not take learners' social situation and environment into consideration. To challenge this limitation, Norton provides the concept of "investment." This notion is an attempt "to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world" (Norton, 1995, p. 17). The word "investment" has a double meaning in this concept: first, investments are "intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learners' identities"; second, investments are "intimately connected to ... their desires for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 120). The immigrant women had to deal with a drastic change of their social status: from educated and professional beings to immigrants who cannot speak English well.

Some of the women resisted the way they were positioned by other "native" English speakers at their work place. They challenged these positions and set up new identities in the U.S. One of the immigrant women, Eva, a Pole who was highly motivated to learn English as a second language, began working at a fast food restaurant in the U.S. Eva was surrounded by English native speakers at her work place, and she was not successful at interacting with the other workers due to the strong resistance by her surroundings. Quotations from their learners' diaries show that Eva and other women in this study constantly negotiated their identities.

Norton argues that Spolsky's (1989) description of natural language learning "does not necessarily offer language learners the opportunity to learn a second-language in an open and stimulating environment" (Norton, 2000, p.112). Eva's example suggests that it is crucial to consider and uncover power relations in the social contexts in which second language learners are engaged. Even though language learners are highly "motivated" as individuals to learn the language, many social factors, such as positioning and power issues, can hinder successful learning. Thus, Investment is a more multidimensional concept than motivation. The environment that second language learners are in is a complex one, and the notion of "investment" enables us to look at language learners' motivation and identities in a way that fully addresses this complexity.

Affinity group

Through my previous research (2000) on anime and language learning, I found that learning Japanese is an "investment" some anime students use to obtain higher status in the anime community. In terms of empowering anime fans, knowledge of Japanese language is one way to shape-shift their portfolios. Computer skills and access to the Internet also operate to shape-shift anime fans' portfolios in the anime community. Gee offers another useful concept, the "affinity group" (2002), in order to capture an aspect of socio-cultural learning through learners' out-of-class activities. An affinity group is "a group wherein people form affiliations with each other, often at a distance (that is, not necessarily face-to-face), primarily through shared practices or a common endeavor (which entails shared practices), and only secondarily through shared culture, gender, ethnicity, or face-to-face relationships" (Gee, 2002, p. 65). Gee explains this concept by presenting Almon, an immigrant boy in Lam's study (2000), as an example of successful language learning within an affinity group (Gee, 2002). Almon used to

worry about his future career because even after living in the U.S. for five years, he felt his English skills would never be good enough. Interestingly, his attitude toward English dramatically changed. Almon learned English as a second language by discussing Japanese pop music with people from different countries through the Internet. This is one example of a successful learning strategy from the students' out-of-class activities. If teachers were aware of such learning, they could build on it in school. Just like Almon, anime students practice the target language, Japanese, as a tool to acquire agency within an affinity group. The biggest difference between classroom learning and out-of-classroom activities in this case is that students are aware of their agency in the affinity group and take an active role in participating. Paying attention to students' out-of-class activities helps educators understand student-centered, active learning.

Norton's study uses the idea of investment to shed light on the complex situations of language learners. Unfortunately, the application of this notion has not yet been extended to learners of languages other than English as a second/foreign language. The notion of investment needs to be applied to a variety of languages in order to better understand power issues and social situations for different language learners. The concept of investment suggests that one important aspect of such an investigation would be looking at the process of how language learners negotiate their identities in given situations.

As I discussed, the notions of investment and meta-reflexivity help educators to look at the complex process of negotiating learners' identities. Now, I review several studies that contain useful concepts and socio-cultural perspectives relevant to language learning. Vitanova (2005) investigated the agency and subjectivity of ESL learners in the U.S. When learners face social constraints that give disadvantage to them, such as being labeled as "immigrants who cannot

speak English properly,” learners can change the situation contingently and create a space for possible agency. As one of such examples of creating space, Vitanova (2005, p. 165) presents the following exchange between Dimitri and Natalia, adult immigrants to the U.S. in the study:

Dimitri: People [tell us] “you have **charm** accent” (sarcastic tone).

Natalia: Yeah, “Don’t lose it” (imitates the other’s intonation).

Both: (Laugh).

Using Bakhtin (1984)’s take on laughter as a way to shift the social orders, Vitanova points out that resistance using laughter is an act of agency. The laughter can show sarcasm, disgust, irony and other feelings that the agent might have. Vitanova states, “the participants’ voices challenge, contest, and resist the more authoritative voices of others and the ways they are being positioned by them” (Vitanova, 2005, p. 166). Is it possible to apply this notion to the reverse situation: U.S. students who learn foreign languages? What are the situations that U.S. students might face when speaking in foreign languages? Gee’s discussion of the shape-shifting portfolio suggests how foreign language can be a way to shift the social orders.

Shape-shifting portfolio

The idea of *shape-shifting portfolio people* (Gee, 2002) is one example of successful learning using meta-reflexivity and agency effectively. Gee (2002) describes *millennials, who were born between 1982 and 1998*, as youth who shape themselves according to “*class-based customized standardization* [Italics in original]” as “shape-shifting portfolio people” (Gee, 2002, pp. 62-63). The word, “portfolio” does not necessarily mean a collection of documents; rather, it is used as a metaphor for the invisible skills needed to help climb the ladder to success. This is the expression Gee uses to describe youth who shape their portfolios by collecting skills in order to access a variety of resources to be successful in the capitalist society. These youth continue to

recreate their portfolios according to their experiences in order to make themselves available for different tasks in different times. In the New Capitalism, “the capitalism of our current technologically driven, knowledge-based global economy” (Gee, 2001), class is defined not only by the amount of money one has, but also by the nature of one’s experiences, skills, and achievements. For example, millennials collect skills to access a variety of resources in order to “customize themselves” for elite schools. However, for some the goal is different: Mario, a working-class Mexican immigrant does shape-shift his portfolio, but his goal is “to maintain his cultural identity as a Mexican living in the United States” (p. 128). Thus, millennials shape-shift their portfolios to meet whatever goals they have in mind.

While this approach offers a useful framework to understand today’s youth, it raises as many questions as it answers. Young, Dillon and Moje (2002) criticize Gee’s description of shape-shifting portfolio millennials for being “too generalized and too global” (p.129). Young, Dillon and Moje describe how portfolios were shaped differently by three millennial youths with middle-class backgrounds, none of whom perfectly fit Gee’s description of millennials. According to Gee, “class is defined by the nature of one’s Portfolio, the sorts of experiences, skills, and achievement one has accrued, and one’s ability to manage these in a Shape-Shifting way” (p. 63). The problem is that middle- and upper-class millennials set the goal of being elite in the New Capitalism. Is this goal-setting influenced by students’ race, gender, and sexual orientation? How can we theorize millennials who resist being labeled as “successful candidates” in the U.S. white, middle-class society? Demographics in the U.S. are changing. Students are from economically, socially and educationally diverse backgrounds. Success is not necessarily defined by being elite.

The discussion of millennials' multiple ways of shape-shifting portfolio calls attention to students' social and cultural backgrounds, goals, and learners' identities. In my study, Beth is a good example of shape-shifting her portfolio according to her interest in Japanese popular culture and Japanese language. Beth, who has a white, middle-class background also shows her resistance to being labeled by others according to social norms. Next, I discuss discourse theories as a tool to understand JFL students' social and cultural backgrounds.

Japanese Popular Culture and JFL Learning

Interest in Japanese popular culture such as *anime*, Japanese animation, *manga*, and video games is growing rapidly among youth in the United States (Gee, 2003; Napier, 2001). The front page of *the Wall Street Journal* on August 5, 2004, featured an article titled "Learning Japanese, once about resumes, is now about cool." Parker interviewed some Japanese instructors and JFL students in the south of the U.S. and reported how the big boom of Japanese popular culture has changed the "Japanese-language students" in the U.S. The top reasons for learning Japanese have shifted from "a smart choice for ambitious, business-minded college students" to "cool pop culture, through comics, street fashion and animated movies called anime," according to this article. Elsewhere, a Japanese teacher in Philadelphia, Manes, points out that JFL students have become younger in the past ten years (2005). JFL learners used to be businesspeople, lawyers and doctors who "had a lot of knowledge about Japanese culture," although they "retained a certain detached attitude toward it" (Manes, 2005). On the other hand, young students who are attracted to Japanese popular culture were "absorbing Japanese language and customs directly with their eyes and ears" (2005). *The National Survey of K-12 Foreign Language Education* (1997) shows that Japanese language learners are the fastest growing group among less commonly taught languages in the United States. It goes without saying that popular culture has

a big impact on the current demographics of JFL learners in the U.S. These students' individual engagements with Japanese popular culture also create an impact on their social activities and structures.

Multiliteracies and new literacies

There are only a few studies that examine Japanese popular culture, social identity and language learning in the education field even though adolescents' interest in Japanese popular culture is booming in the U.S. For a long time, popular culture has been looked down upon in the educational field. Some teachers believe that reading comics is for children who have not reached the level of reading "real" books (Marsh and Millard, 2000). However, Gee challenged the existing idea that "playing video games is a waste of time because the child is learning no 'content'" (Gee, 2003, p. 45). In "What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy" (2003), Gee explains what video games can offer by providing 36 learning principles. Four of these principles are closely connected to my own study: the Identity, Practice, Situated Meaning, and Affinity Group principles. Within the context of video games, learners create a virtual identity that is similar to situated identity. The Practice principle is an important element that popular culture can provide for learners. Learners can practice "in a context where the practice is not boring" (2003, p. 208). The meanings of signs are all situated in experiencing different parts of video games. Colorful figures, background, activities, stories, music and other signs can help learners to recognize situated meanings. The Affinity Group principle indicates a strong bond with other members who share similar interests, goals and practices. Although Gee provided eye-opening principles, he did not mention the Japanese video game industry's influence on the U.S. The most popular "platform" type of games such as the Sony PlayStation 2, the Nintendo GameCube and Sega are from Japan. The Japanese video game industry not only

succeeded in selling these products in the U.S, but also motivated young males and females to begin studying Japanese as a foreign language (Fukunaga, 2000). Thus, I add one principle of “Japanese language and culture” as the 37th learning principle on Gee’s list. Marsh and Millard (2000) encourage us to be aware of “the plurality of cultures” (p. 21) in children’s popular culture texts. There are multiple cultural aspects hidden in some video games.

In the concepts of multiliteracies and new literacies (Alvermann, 2002; Lanksheer & Knobel, 2003), popular culture is a new type of text that has not been sufficiently explored in the education field. Some studies show that language learners’ activities related to popular culture have a big impact on students’ lives and literacy practices. In the area of second language acquisition, Almon in Lam’s study (2000) gained a positive attitude to live in his real life through a virtual, online J-pop (Japanese popular music) community and, while doing so, greatly improved his written English, which was his second language. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003a; 2003b) looked at two female students’ informal writings in “fanfictions” (*“fanfics”* for short) that often include anime characters, and they were surprised to see the students’ talent as writers. Those fanfic writings looked very different from their classroom essays. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar suggest teachers should be aware of possible literacy learning that is not valued in school settings. Different writings such as fanfics can be used to get to know students’ “hidden” literacy skills, since both girls in this study admitted that they spend “far more time and energy” (2003a, p. 561) on writing their fanfics than they do on writing school assignments. The two girls in Chandler-Olcott and Mahar’s study are just like college JFL students who are aware of agency in their out-of-classroom literacy practices. Although these two students were successful yet quiet in classrooms, they were not so “quiet” with their display of fanfics on the web page.

Teachers may be surprised to see that some students who are not successful with classroom practices may be actively learning with out-of-school practices (Lam, 2000).

Hybridity of anime

Napier (2001) published a scholarly book on anime, and discusses many aspects and possibilities of anime in her work. Clearly anime and *manga* (Japanese graphic novels) are part of mainstream Japanese popular culture. But how can we explain why anime and manga attract many people in other countries? Many anime fans in the United States admit that the uniqueness of anime is one of the things that attracts them. What is so unique about anime? If Western viewers of anime like only the Japanese-ness of the genre, why is it so popular in Japan? "... [T]he most fundamental reason for animation's popularity in Japan is not just economic constraints and aesthetic traditions but the very flexibility, creativity, and freedom in the medium itself, a site of resistance to the conformity of Japanese society" (Napier, 2001, p. 26). Although discussion of anime in academia often focuses on its "arresting visual style," Napier (2001) argues that anime's narrative art form is also a strong reason for its popularity. Once we acknowledge that manga is a base for anime (most of the time), it explains the high quality of narrative in anime. The popularity of manga among Japanese adults and young people is indicated by the fact that nearly 40% of all publications in Japan are in the comic form, manga (2000, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan). There is much competition on a weekly or monthly basis among different kinds of manga publications. Only some manga are popular enough to be "recreated" in anime form. Napier (2001) also states that anime has "a new kind of hybridity" (Napier, 2001, p. 26) that no other medium can provide.

Contrary to Homi Bhabha's (1994) vision of "hybridity" in terms of a colonial (or postcolonial) exercise of power and discrimination, this vision of hybridity is an equalizing one.

Safe within the stateless fantasy space that anime provides, both Japanese and non-Japanese can participate in trying on a variety of what might be called “postethnic” identities. Anime creates a third space that has elements of both Japanese-ness and “Otherness” (Napier, 2001, p. 255). This notion of Otherness indicates anime is a medium that is not U.S. mainstream culture. Thus, the uniqueness of anime is its new kind of hybridity. Napier concludes that “anime may be seen as a dark mirror that reflects Japan to the West and to some extent vice-versa, in that anime also gives Japanese viewers a distinctive vision of non-Japanese worlds” (Napier, 2001, pp.24-25). Napier makes it clear that anime is not only a popular culture product of Japan, but also a creative medium that is globally relevant.

Although Kusanagi (2003) agrees to a certain extent with Napier’s point about the global nature of anime, he does not take Napier’s stance completely. Kusanagi critiques Napier’s point because it does not consider the historical background of the anime industry in Japan and in the U.S. Kusanagi reminds us of the need to pay attention to other factors such as commercialism and the background of anime in the U.S. Kusanagi traces the history of the anime import business in the U.S. from 1960 to 2003 in the book titled *How Has Japanese Animation Been Viewed in the U.S?* He explains the process through which original anime was modified by a third person and sometimes lost its attractiveness after being imported to the U.S. The global nature of anime was not necessarily the anime creators’ intention; rather, they were forced to adjust their style of anime in order to attract an audience in the U.S. It was unavoidable that anime creators would tone down the Japanese cultural aspects of anime in order to sell their product in the U.S. because of the economic power of the U.S. market, but some Japaneseness still remains. As a result, anime attracts current viewers around the world with its new kind of hybridity.

Because of anime's new kind of hybridity, anime viewers can explore and challenge things in ways not yet possible to do in real life. This creates the critical nature of anime. Napier suggests that "[A]nime does not simply reflect society; it problematizes aspects of the dominant social culture" (Napier, 2001, p. 24). This critical nature is not limited to anime, but can be found instead in many popular culture texts. Themes that are taboo in certain cultures can be discussed in popular culture as a creative medium. When Japanese popular culture is consumed by non-Japanese, the difference of discourses creates space for new discussion topics. This new openness within popular culture is important to understanding U.S. college students' interaction with this medium. I will discuss several popular culture texts fully in chapter 3.

Anime fandom

Anime fandom is attracting many college students. Such anime fans attend anime clubs in colleges all over the United States. In fact, there is a large anime club at South University. The club meets weekly and watches six thirty-minute anime programs for three hours in Japanese with English subtitles. Napier (2001) conducted a study of such an anime club at a university in Texas from 1998 to 1999. Her study provides a profile of the anime fans and their perspectives on anime. Napier states, "[N]either specifically Japanese nor wholly influenced by the West, anime appeals to a generation of Americans who care much less about the national origins of a cultural product than they do about the quality of the product itself" (2001, p. 255). Napier's claim suggests that the fact that anime is Japanese is irrelevant to Japanese language learners. However, my previous study showed that more than half of the people who took a college level Japanese course were interested in Japanese popular culture (Fukunaga, 2000), and for some anime was what drew them to learning Japanese in the first place. Concerning the current "Japanese boom" in the popular culture field, with the popularity of some movies as *Play Station*,

Kill Bill, *Lost in Translation*, and *The Last Samurai*, I argue that people in the U.S. are becoming more aware of national origins than they were at the time of Napier's study. In the case of South University, 143 students took JPNS1001, a beginning level course in the fall of 2003, while only 100 students took the same course in 2000. Many students said that they were motivated to begin studying Japanese because of their interest in Japanese popular culture, traditional culture, technology and international business. In the field of less commonly taught languages, increasing the number of learners is crucial. As a Japanese instructor, I cannot ignore the fact that more students are choosing Japanese, whether to satisfy the university's language requirement or as a required course for their majors.

Japanese as a less commonly taught language

Japanese is one of the less commonly taught languages, and is also classified as Level 4, the most difficult level for native English speakers to learn by the Foreign Service Institute (Spokane & Keatley, 2003). JFL students must learn non-alphabetic characters in order to read and write in Japanese, so they need to have specific strategies that differ from those used for more commonly taught languages. Spokane & Keatley (2003) argue that little research has been done on specific learning strategies for less commonly taught languages in order to improve "students' performance, proficiency, confidence, and motivation." However, I argue that it is necessary to look at students' prior knowledge and activities outside the classroom in order to develop the specific strategies for learning and teaching less commonly taught languages.

Nowadays, students' learning strategies have expanded dramatically compared to the pre-Internet era. The Internet enables students everywhere to access many cultures and languages. Because of this, it is difficult for classroom teachers to imagine what kind of out-of-class activities are connected with the students' successful learning strategies. Some students practice

the target language as a tool in order to perform within an affinity group. Although there are studies of Japanese popular culture in areas of cultural studies, film studies, information technology, sociology and the new literacy studies (He, 2003; Lam, 2000; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003), little information is available to understand JFL learners' activities and perspectives on particular popular culture and its application to JFL instruction. Having a better understanding of JFL students' knowledge and interest in contemporary Japanese popular culture is vital for educators to renovate JFL classrooms to make them engaging, informative, and focused on their cultural proficiency.

In this chapter, I established the theoretical framework for my dissertation. This frame consists of a combination of Discourse analysis and socio-cultural perspectives of language learning emphasizing identity and agency. The primary theoretical concepts I use are Archer's meta-reflexivity, Blommaert's inhabitable/ascriptive identities, and Ochs's affective/epistemic stances. In the field of foreign language education, I believe that discussion of popular culture is one way to help learners to acquire Discourses and be aware of orders of discourse in the society of the target language. I also reviewed relevant studies of language learners' identities, agency, and Japanese popular culture. My understanding of identities is that they are subject to change (Duff & Uchida, 1997) in different social situations and can be negotiated by individual agency. This dissertation is an interview study, but I am aware that interviews are co-constructed by an interviewer and interviewees as well as societal discourses. In the following chapter, I describe the methods of the study and introduce the research participants and the content of the Japanese popular culture texts that are used in weekly discussion meetings.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The major purposes of this chapter are: to share some findings of the pilot study as background of the current study; to describe the design of the study including purpose, research questions, and setting; to introduce the research participants with their demographic information; to explain the methodology and procedures of data collection; to describe the Japanese popular culture texts that are used in the discussion group meetings; and to introduce analytical rules for data analysis.

Background of the Study

Pilot study

Prior to my dissertation study, I conducted a qualitative pilot study with three anime students, Emily, Ted and Sean (pseudonyms) at South University in 2003. My initial questions were “What role does Japanese popular culture play in the out-of-classroom experiences of today’s youth in the U.S and what do students tell me about their knowledge of anime?” I collected data from three anime students using in-depth, individual, photo-elicited interviews and from each student’s written response after the interview. Each of the college students told stories about their activities related to anime and its subcultures. I found that Ted and Sean had similar experiences of anime related activities. Both of them began playing Japanese video games when they were in elementary school, and became interested in anime and manga. On the other hand, Emily did not play many video games. Instead, she was more interested in anime, manga, anime products, and Japanese music.

Anime seemed to play different roles for each student. For Emily, anime played a central role as a social activity, while for Ted it was strongly connected with a future career. I consider

Sean an information seeker, and anime was a stepping stone for him to move on to the next step in his Japanese studies. These students also shared a set of “anime” values and were highly aware of the national origin of anime and the elements of national culture within the genre. These students all agreed that “true anime fans” only watch anime in Japanese with English subtitles instead of the dubbed-versions of anime broadcast on T.V. They also shared a critical stance toward the “Americanization” of anime, such as gender representation. Anime offered Emily, Ted and Sean the opportunity to construct/ reconstruct their identities within specific communities of practice. Having insider knowledge is a form of social capital and also increases their sense of belonging and prestige within the social community of anime. For these anime students, anime is far more than a “motivational tool” to study Japanese. Rather, anime is a key to constructing their identities and setting their goals for the future.

Conducting the pilot study raised two main issues. First, the three JFL students in the pilot study are self-identified, hard-core anime fans. What are the insights of JFL students who are secret anime fans? Second, these students portray their identities and critical stance through narrating their anime activities. How do secret anime fans narrate their identities and critical stance in relation to anime and its subcultures? Thus, I deliberately chose JFL students who are secret anime fans, mostly women, as participants in my dissertation study.

Design of the Study

Purpose

Increasing numbers of researchers and educators have begun discussing the impact of Japanese popular culture, especially anime, in the U.S. (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Napier, 2001). Although the previous studies (Fukunaga, 2000; Napier, 2001) indicate that anime and video game fans are predominantly male, there are some secret Japanese popular culture fans in

classrooms. The purpose of this study is to understand multiple ways contemporary Japanese popular culture texts are experienced by JFL learners who are also secret fans of anime and Japanese popular culture. In particular, this study is interested in the critical aspect of the relationship between their experiences and its impact on their individual identities in everyday life.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this qualitative study are: 1) How do JFL students narrate their identities as Japanese popular culture fans in diverse social situations? 2) How do JFL students narrate their critical attitudes towards both Japanese and U.S. societies? I analyzed multiple data in different contexts: 1) photographs taken by participants; 2) individual photo-elicited interviews; and 3) a series of group discussions on Japanese popular culture texts.

Setting

I conducted this study in a JFL program at a large state university, South University (pseudonym), located in a medium-sized college town in the southeast United States. There are approximately 250 JFL learners in the Japanese program, and six instructors, including teaching assistants. At the time of data collection, I was teaching Japanese as a teaching assistant. On campus, there is the Anime Club, an active student organization related to Japanese popular culture, and some of the JFL students in the Japanese program are involved. There is also the Japan Club, an organization for people who are interested in Japanese language and culture. Thus, JFL students who are willing to communicate in Japanese have opportunities to do so on campus. I collected data from April 2004 to September 2005.

Research Participants

Overview

Most of the data in this study came from six participants: four who took part in the weekly discussions and the interviews (Beth, Meg, Lucy, and Anna), and two who took part in the interviews only (Kate and David). All the students' names are pseudonyms. Much of the research on anime has focused on men, but many women are also interested in anime and its subcultures, such as Japanese music. Therefore, in order to find secret anime fans' perspectives on popular culture, I purposely chose women, with the exception of one man who showed a strong interest in visual kei and Japanese music. I targeted JFL students who were willing to participate in weekly discussion groups for three months during the summer of 2004, and who were eager to learn about Japanese people, culture, and society through popular culture texts in the U.S.

The participants in the discussion group were three college undergraduate students (Meg, Lucy, and Anna) and one graduate student (Beth) who were learning Japanese as a foreign language in the U.S. Although Kate was away for the whole summer when the discussion group met, I included her interview data because I find it particularly interesting. I also included David's interview data even though I met him for the first time after the initial data collection period was over. David has a strong interest in the same area of Japanese popular culture as my other participants.

Table 1 provides basic information about the participants' ages, majors, experiences with Japanese studies, and their interests. All six participants are Caucasian. The fact that the population of South University is predominantly Caucasian made it difficult to find JFL students who are in a minority group such as African American or Asian. Although I found two Asian

students who were interested in Japanese popular culture, they were not able to join the weekly discussion group meetings during the summer. “Japanese Study” indicates the Japanese classes participants were taking in the fall of 2004. Exceptions were Beth, who had finished taking all levels of Japanese courses, and Kate, who was studying abroad in Taiwan.

Table 1. Students’ Background Information

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Japanese Study</i>	<i>Interests</i>
Beth	25	Art History grad. student	Finished JPNS 4000 Level (highest) class	anime, manga, J-pop/ rock, karaoke visual kei bands, tea ceremony video game (<i>Final Fantasy</i>), cooking
Meg	19	Art and Japanese	In the JPNS 2001 Japanese class	anime, video game (<i>Final Fantasy</i>) J-pop/rock, visual kei bands (Gackt)
Lucy	19	Art	In the JPNS 2001 class	anime, video game (<i>Final Fantasy</i>) music, French, fashion, singing
Anna	20	Japanese	In the JPNS 3001 class	Japanese family, ESL, anime
Kate	19	Japanese and Chinese	Finished JPNS 1002 class	music, cosplay, visual kei bands anime conventions
David	19	Japanese	In the JPNS 2001 class	visual kei bands, music, cosplay

Beth

I first met Beth in a Japanese literature class taught by a Japanese professor in Japanese. Knowing my research interest in Japanese popular culture, the professor invited me to observe his class when he used a Japanese comic book based on an anime film as a reading text. Prior to my observing the class, the professor told me that there were anime fans in his class whom I might like to talk to. On the day of the class observation, the professor did not show up, and all the students and I waited until a secretary told us that the class was cancelled. Four or five

students and I remained in class and kept talking about comic books. This is how I began talking with Beth, and I realized she was one of the anime fans whom the professor had mentioned.

Beth is a 25-year-old, self-identified White woman, and she is studying art history as a master's student at South University. Beth is of medium height with shoulder-length, light brown hair and green eyes. My first impression of Beth was that she was a reserved, serious, and well-mannered student. However, she was talkative and silly when we began talking about anime and Japanese popular culture. She had taught English as a part of the JET Program (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program) in Japan for one year (2002-2003). Beth has a strong interest in Japanese popular culture, especially in anime, manga, *Final Fantasy* (video game), J-pop, J-rock, visual kei bands, and karaoke. However, she emphasizes that she is also interested in traditional Japanese culture, such as the tea ceremony. She also collects manekineko (Japanese cat dolls) and Japanese cookbooks. Beth's Japanese is intermediate level, while other participants' Japanese is beginning level. She studied Japanese in undergraduate programs in the U.S. for three years before she went to Japan to teach English as an assistant teacher. After coming back to the U.S, she entered graduate school at South University and took 4000-level Japanese language and literature classes.

Meg

I met Meg in the class I taught (JPNS1001) in the fall of 2002, and I continued to teach her the following semester, spring 2003 (JPNS1002). Meg is a 19-year-old woman, self-identified Caucasian, and she is majoring in Art and Japanese as an undergraduate student at South University. In my Japanese class, she was somewhat quiet, but was hard-working and had a unique style. She was serious about studying Japanese, although she was not confident speaking in Japanese. I remember that she sometimes dressed in a funky style, with pink and

black striped tights and Goth-type accessories on her slender body. Meg has blue eyes and short hair that often changes from blond to pink. I am not sure what her natural hair color is. Meg was a tomboy who played soccer from 1st grade to 11th grade. She is close to her family, especially to her grandmother, although she took Japanese instead of Spanish, which is her grandmother's favorite foreign language. It seems that her family was not happy that Meg decided to take Japanese.

Meg's favorite musician is Gackt, a male Japanese pop/ rock star who is popular in Japan and other countries because of his visual style as well as his musical talent. Gackt used to be a lead singer in a visual kei band called "Malice Mizer." Meg also collects video game strategy guides and figures of video game characters from the *Final Fantasy* series. Meg is learning Japanese hoping to understand Gackt and to be able to play her favorite video game, the *Final Fantasy* series in Japanese. Meg was taking JPNS 2001 (the third semester of Japanese study) in fall semester 2004, and she was planning to take as many Japanese classes as possible and to go on a study abroad to Japan in the future.

Lucy

Lucy was a JFL student I saw many times in the Japanese language lab. I have never taught her Japanese, but I knew her from Japanese-related events organized by a student organization, the Japan Club. The first thing that caught my eye about Lucy was her style of dress, including her outfit and shoes. Lucy makes an effort to keep up with current fashion by researching fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Styles*. Her long brunette hair is almost always blow-dried and styled, and her make-up gives extra shine to her big blue eyes. When I was looking for potential participants for this study, I saw her in the language lab and talked to her about participating in my study, although I was not sure if she was interested in Japanese popular

culture or not. Lucy was excited about this project and was happy to be part of it, although she did not think she was an expert on anime.

Lucy is a 19-year-old woman, self-identified Caucasian, who is majoring in Art as an undergraduate student at South University. Lucy is fashionable, friendly, lively and talkative, and she is not afraid to express her opinions. She is interested in art, especially fashion, foreign films, and music, and she sings in a band. She enjoys learning French and Japanese as foreign languages, and also enjoys traveling. Lucy is interested in Japanese contemporary fashion and music, anime, and the *Final Fantasy* video game. She was taking the JPNS 3001 in the fall of 2004.

Anna

I first met Anna at a local high school where she was a senior in 2001. At the request of an advisor of the club, I visited her high school several times to speak about Japanese to the members of the newly formed Japan Club. There were about ten students who really wanted to learn about Japanese culture and language in the Japan Club because the school did not offer Japanese in their curriculum. As Anna had planned to do, she came to South University after graduating from high school and took a Japanese course I taught (JPNS 1001) in her freshman year in the fall of 2002.

Anna is a 20-year-old, self-identified Caucasian woman, majoring in Japanese as an undergraduate student at South University. She has long, wavy blond hair and greenish hazel eyes, and she always looks neat. In Japanese class, Anna was shy and quiet, but very serious about Japanese study, and willing to learn anything about Japan. Among the discussion group members, Anna had the least experience and knowledge of Japanese popular culture, although she used to watch anime with her friends in high school and college. However, Anna has a

connection to Japanese culture through tutoring Japanese children who live in the town where South University is located. Anna visits two Japanese families every week. Each family has two elementary-school children. She helps all four children with their schoolwork as a tutor, and she is a conversation partner with one of the mothers. When I first asked Anna about the possibility of participating in this study, she told me that she did not know a lot about Japanese popular culture, but would like to learn more. At South University, there are no Japanese language classes offered during summer, so Anna decided to join us in order to learn more about Japanese popular culture. She was taking JPNS 3001 in the fall of 2004.

Kate

I was introduced to Kate by another Japanese teaching assistant at the beginning of fall semester 2003. Although I have never taught Kate in my Japanese classes, I noticed her before I was formally introduced to her. Kate's impressive appearance reminded me of an anime character. She had short, jet-black hair with bangs, and she wore several earrings in her pierced ears. Her black outfits and piercing reminded me of "Goth" culture. By "Goth" culture, I mean a group of students who always wear black clothes, have many body piercings, wear white make-up, and tend to be anti-social. I had the impression that she was very polite despite her Goth-like appearance. She claimed that she was a music person, not an anime person.

Kate is a 19-year-old, self-identified white European woman, majoring in Japanese and Chinese as an undergraduate at South University. Kate had prior knowledge of Japanese because of her strong interest in music, especially in Japanese visual kei bands, and her experience of visiting Japan for a short period of time. At anime conventions in the U.S, she has worked at booths selling J-pop/ rock music. According to Kate, she has been asked to assist Japanese musicians who perform at those conventions as a translator, even though her Japanese is limited.

Before summer started, Kate participated in a photo-elicited interview. Unfortunately, she was busy going to conventions during the summer and could not attend the weekly discussion group meetings even though she had planned to do so. After the summer was over, she left the U.S. to go to Taiwan for a one-year study abroad. However, I kept in touch with Kate through email exchanges.

David

I met David in the JPNS 2001 class I taught in the fall of 2004. David was able to forego two semesters worth of Japanese courses because he took Japanese in high school. Therefore, David took JPNS 2001 during his freshman year. He is a tall, slender man who sat in the front row. He is a 19-year-old, self-identified White man, majoring in Japanese as an undergraduate student at South University. He has big brown eyes and light brown, shoulder-length hair, and he usually looks neat and clean.

Once, David came to the class with some make-up on and black nail polish and sat in the very front row where he usually sits. I asked him whether he liked cosplay. He smiled and answered, “I sometimes do cosplay. I bought some crazy stuff when I went to Harajuku in Japan.” Prior to coming to South University, David took Japanese classes in high school, and he visited Japan. Harajuku, in Tokyo, is famous for street fashion, including cosplay. In my Japanese class, students are required to make an individual presentation on an aspect of Japanese culture. Topics include *otsukimi* (moon-viewing festival in autumn), *undokai* (sport festival) and *visual kei bands* (Japanese music bands). I also allow students to choose their favorite topics. When I saw David’s name listed for the visual kei bands presentation, I did not think much of it until he showed me the handout he had made. It was a beautiful, elaborate, well-organized handout about popular visual kei bands. On the day of the presentation, David was dressed all in

black, with make-up and black dots that looked like tear drops below his eyes. I appreciated his passion to share his interest with other students, even though I was surprised that only one student was willing to ask David questions about visual kei bands. Although none of the students in class said so directly, I had the impression that their silence indicated discomfort with his unconventional appearance.

Methodology

The methodology used for this study is discourse analysis of audio and videotaped recordings of discussion group meetings, together with individual, photo-elicited interviews (Allen & Labbo, 2001) of all the participants. Allen & Labbo (2001) conducted a qualitative research project to understand young children's out-of-school culture and used photographs that students took in their communities. During the interviews, children told narratives and wrote stories based on their photographs. In this project, a photo-elicitation method allowed participants to be the center of the story-telling, and it also helped researchers to obtain in-depth interview data.

In the pilot study, I conducted one-hour interviews with each participant using the photo-elicited interview method. Using photo-elicited interviews (Allen & Labbo, 2001) was successful in terms of getting students' perspectives on popular culture texts and language learning. Photos helped students have some control over the narrative process, and helped the researcher have a common ground with the students on the topic. I used the same data collection method for individual interviews for my dissertation and added discussion group meetings in order to examine the group dynamics in terms of the students' display of social identity and critical stance.

I asked participants to tell their stories related to popular culture, identity, and language learning based on their photographs at the individual photo-elicited interviews. After the first individual interview, four participants and I began meeting weekly to discuss Japanese popular culture texts over a period of eight weeks. I transcribed all the interview data and the discussion group meetings. I also analyzed the interview transcriptions using different themes, such as gender, students' identity displays, and resistance toward the cultural norm in the U.S. Then, I coded the same transcripts and other data sources including photographs and students' logs with agency, reflexivity, stance, and indexical resources informed by discourse analysis and linguistic analysis (see the analysis of data section for the details).

Validity and Reliability

To ensure internal reliability, I used triangulation. Triangulation may involve the use of multiple data collection methods such as observation, interviews and document analysis; multiple sources; multiple investigators; and multiple theoretical perspectives (Glesne, 1999). I used five data collection methods: photographs, interviews, participants' written reflections, participants' observation of discussion group meetings, and classroom observations. Multiple sources of data on one phenomenon can make the interpretation stronger. I also used ongoing and final member checks for validity to make sure I represented the participants and their ideas accurately.

Since my study is based on qualitative research, it focuses on the particular in depth, not what is generally true of the many. Nonetheless, external validity, or generalizability, is an important aspect of any research. The question is to what extent findings can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2002). In the case of my study of JFL students, I only used six participants.

However, Merriam argues that “much can be learned from a particular case” (Merriam, 2002, p. 179). It is up to the readers to decide whether the case is applicable to other situations or not.

Researcher Bias/ Assumptions

I am a Japanese woman and educator who lives in the U.S. I grew up in southern Japan and taught English as a foreign language. I have dark brown hair and eyes, and I am petite. I came to the United States for my graduate study planning to teach Japanese as a foreign language. My Asian identity quickly developed since I moved to the U.S. in 1999. Now I am married to a Caucasian man who grew up in the southern U.S. Usually, I am the only “colored” person at family gatherings in my husband’s hometown. Occasionally, I get puzzled and frustrated by being labeled with insensitive racial terms, such as “Oriental.” It reminds me of an Indian rug or furniture. At the same time, I had an incident when I referred to someone as “African American” and the person did not like the term because she preferred “Black.” I have a strong interest in race, class, gender issues in society, and education. I believe that self-identifying can be difficult when you live in a foreign country, and identifying someone else is more complex with social and personal background and history. I am working on breaking stereotypes of Japan and Japanese. I have been living in the U.S. over six years and I feel like I am outside of both cultures in some ways. Having experiences of living in different countries, I am more aware of multiculturalism. As an educator and researcher, I hope to help students develop their awareness of multiculturalism through learning foreign language and culture.

Prior to conducting this study, I asked myself why I have the right to study anime, its subcultures such as J-pop music and video games, and JFL students who are fans of Japanese popular culture. In a way, I am both an insider and outsider in the anime community. I have my own conception of anime because of its strong presence in Japanese society; however, I am not a

fan who claims to know everything about anime. I question whether JFL students in the U.S. have the same concept of anime as I do. Japanese people in my generation grew up with anime as a part of everyday life, although there are some people who do not care for anime and manga. I want to be careful not to push my idea about Japanese popular culture on my students just because I experienced it. Rather, I would like to pay attention to JFL students' perspectives on anime in the U.S. I believe everyone has their own approach and experience with popular culture. Thanks to Beth, I managed to avoid lecturing about popular culture in the discussion group meetings. During her one year in Japan, Beth had developed her idea of popular culture and Japanese society. From my perspective, Beth played an important role as a leader and participant in the discussion meetings and mitigated my authoritative position as a Japanese teacher.

I began wondering about anime students' perspectives and their activities outside of the classroom through teaching Japanese, observing students and communicating in classroom settings at a university. When I began teaching Japanese in the U.S., anime students reminded me of my own experience of learning English as a second language through popular culture such as Hollywood movies and the Beatles. I was curious to see what parts of anime U.S. students are interested in and why such students are fascinated with anime. There is a danger of hearing what I only want to hear. In other words, as a Japanese teacher, I may only want to hear positive perspectives on learning and anime. In order to be aware of my subjectivity, I kept a research journal. I also avoided having students who were in my Japanese classes at the time of data collection as participants in this study, so that I did not need to worry about participants acting as good students for better grades.

Procedures of Data Collection

Data Collection

The basic structure of my data collection involved two main stages: 1) individual photo-elicited interviews, 2) Discussion group meetings.

Data sources included:

- photographs taken by all six participants
- interviews with all the participants (audio-taped)
- four students' group discussions of Japanese popular culture texts (participant observation, audio-taped and video-taped)
- four students' daily log activity during summer
- students' written responses and additional comments by email (collected and copied)
- researcher reflections during and after data collection (personal research journal)

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited JFL students by sending emails and by giving flyers to some students except those who were in the class I was teaching in the Japanese program in spring 2004. About ten JFL students who were interested in participating in this study contacted me to get more information about it. Then, I found out that it was difficult for some of them to participate in the discussion group meetings during summer since they would be out of town. Four JFL students came to the first meeting for planning and to sign the consent form. There were two more students who participated in individual interviews, but they were not able to participate in the discussion group meetings during summer.

Individual Photo-elicited Interview

I gave disposable cameras to all six participants and asked them to document their interests in popular culture, especially Japanese popular culture, through photographs. Prior to the first discussion group meeting, all participants except David had individual photo-elicited interviews. I used the photographs taken by the participants to guide individual interviews. The followings are examples of questions I asked in the initial interview: 1) How did you feel about the experience of taking photographs for this study? 2) Would you tell me a story about each photograph? 3) Tell me how you became interested in this type of Japanese popular culture. 4) Would you explain why you are studying Japanese? 5) What are the things you didn't or you couldn't take pictures of even though you wanted to? 6) Is there anything else you wanted to tell me about photos, popular culture and language learning?

The interviews lasted from one hour to one and a half hours, and they were audio-recorded. I asked the participants to send reflections on the interview by email. The second individual interviews to follow-up were conducted after finishing all the discussion group meetings. At the second interview, I showed each participant the transcript of the first interview and let them read through it and make changes if needed. Then I asked some specific questions about the content of the transcript as well as any additional comments from the participants. Participants also submitted the student's reading log at the second interview.

Reading Log

I also asked participants to keep daily logs about their daily activities with Japanese popular culture texts and language learning for eight weeks while they attended weekly discussion group meetings during summer (see Appendix 1 for the Students' log). Participants filled this log a nightly, including weekends. The information included in the log was: the types

of out-of-school activities, the amount of time participants spent studying Japanese, the Japanese popular culture materials participants read or spent time with, the amount of time participants spent with Japanese popular culture texts, the location, and the reasons participants spent time with particular texts. In addition to keeping a daily log, I encouraged participants to write a short journal related to Japanese popular culture and Japanese study. The logs were collected and analyzed.

Discussion Group Meetings

Students met weekly in the living room of my house to discuss a variety of Japanese popular culture texts for ten weeks during summer. I provided some Japanese snacks and sweets with green tea and tried to make a comfortable atmosphere. At each meeting, we had a different topic related to the Japanese popular culture texts that I provided every week, and then we discussed their interpretation and opinions of how Japanese people, culture and society are represented in the text. Sometimes, students freely brought their favorite Japanese popular culture texts and shared them with others. I first selected some texts based on participants' comments in interviews in order to provide opportunities to experience different popular culture texts, which some of them were not familiar with. The discussions were student-centered, but I was a facilitator and participant observer. I observed, tape-recorded and video-recorded all the sessions. Table 2 shows the topics and the popular culture texts we used in the discussion group meetings (see the Content of Discussion Group Meetings section for the details).

Table 2. Topics and texts in the discussion group meetings

	<i>Topics</i>	<i>texts</i>
1 st meeting	Introduction	
2 nd meeting	Miyazaki's anime film	Anime film: <i>Spirited Away</i>
3 rd meeting	Looking at Japan through foreign eyes	Non-anime, US film: <i>Lost in Translation</i>
4 th meeting	English study in Japan	TV clips: <i>Eigo de hanasa naito. (You'd better speak in English)</i>
5 th meeting	Dialects in Japan	One part of anime film: <i>My Neighbors, the Yamadas. Namaiki Voice Churasan</i>
6 th meeting	Family, housing and bath on TV	Anime film: <i>My Neighbor Totoro</i> TV clips: <i>Sazae-san, Chibimaruko-chan</i>
7 th meeting	Family, housing and bath in manga	Manga: <i>Crayon Shin-chan</i> Manga: <i>Sazae-san</i>
8 th meeting	J-pop, J-rock, Visual kei bands	Japanese songs: Kiroro " <i>Best Friend</i> " Utada Hikaru " <i>First Love</i> " Urufuls " <i>Ashita ga aru</i> " Gackt " <i>Emu</i> "
9 th meeting	Video games	<i>Final Fantasy</i> series on Play Station
10 th meeting	Karaoke and food	Ate at a Japanese restaurant and experienced karaoke at a Japanese karaoke room

The original plan of the discussion group topics changed as we met in order to accommodate students' interest and opinions.

Content of Discussion Group Meetings

Several forms of Japanese popular culture attract youth in the U.S. (See figure 1, Chapter 1). In order to find female students' perspectives in particular, I included the following Japanese

popular culture texts to discuss in the discussion group meetings: anime, manga, films, TV dramas, TV programs, video games, J-pop, J-rock, visual kei bands, cosplays, and conventions. The reason why I chose these forms was that participants talked about them during their individual photo-elicited interviews and at the first meeting of discussion group where we introduced ourselves and talked about our favorite Japanese popular culture texts. Figure 1 (chapter 1, p. 8) illustrates the overview of participants' activities with Japanese popular culture. I am going to give general explanations on each form of Japanese popular culture and on specific texts that I used in the discussion group meetings. In the findings chapters, especially in chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss participants' activities with specific popular culture texts more fully.

Anime

Japanese animation is called *anime*, a Japanese abbreviation of the English word, "animation." Anime can be narrowly defined as animated films, TV series, and OVAs (Original Video Animation), originated in Japan. The distinctive characteristics of anime are its complicated story lines, narratives, a wide variety of genres, visual styles, unique voice actors and actress, and subcultures existing around anime. Napier (2001) argues that anime not only reflects contemporary Japanese society, it also can be considered as "a genuinely global phenomenon" of a commercial and a cultural force (Napier, 2001, p. 8). In the discussion group, we watched two entire anime films, "*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*" (*Spirited Away*) by Miyazaki (2001) and "*Tonari no Yamada-kun*" (*My Neighbors, The Yamadas*) by Takahata (1999), some parts of an anime film, "*Tonari no Totoro*" (*My Neighbor Totoro*) by Miyazaki (1988), and one fifteen-minute episode each from the anime TV series based on popular manga, "*Sazae-san*" (*Ms. Sazae*) that was originally written by Hasegawa since 1969, and "*Chibi Maruko-chan*" (*Little Maruko*) by Shibayama (1990).

Manga

Manga is a Japanese term for comic books that are similar to graphic novels in the U.S. The connection between anime and manga is important to note since most anime, except OVAs, are based on manga series. Although anime is often discussed focusing on its “arresting visual style” in academia, Napier (2001) argues that anime’s narrative art form is also a strong reason for its popularity (see Chapter 2). Nowadays, some original Japanese manga translated into English can be seen in the section of “graphic novels” of major bookstores even though manga are not yet as popular as anime in the U.S.

Film, drama, TV

In the U.S., people can get a Japanese channel called “TV Japan” through Dish Network. This channel mainly broadcasts shows produced by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) in Japan. We watched a part of *Churasan*, a fifteen-minute morning drama series about a young woman from Okinawa who tries to become a nurse in Tokyo. We discussed different dialects of Japan such as dialects in Okinawa, Kagoshima, Kansai, Sanuki, and Hokkaido. We also watched a thirty-minute, weekly local show in Kagoshima called “*Namaiki Voice*” (*Sassy Voice*) that introduces local artists, tourist spots, new restaurants and events in Kagoshima. The show I shared with my students was about visiting a small pottery village in Kagoshima, introducing traditional and contemporary pottery studios and local artists. Some local potters answered interview questions in Kagoshima dialect while TV reporters spoke in standard Japanese. We watched and listened to the different use of dialects in different situations.

J-pop, J-rock, and Visual kei

As anime became popular in the U.S, many adolescents and young adults began to listen to J-pop/ J-rock, Japanese pop/ rock music. One reason is that each thirty-minute anime episode

begins with an opening song and ends with a closing song. These songs are called *anison*, a Japanese abbreviation for “anime songs.” In the Japanese music industry, producers and musicians are fully aware that anime make songs more marketable and durable since anison for some popular anime have been passed on from generation to generation. Nowadays, many songs of well-established artists and singers, such as Judy and Mary and Glay, are used as anison while anison were mostly sung by anison specialists in the 70s and 80s. Compared to the songs that are not tied with anime or drama theme songs, anison and drama theme songs make more profit over a long period of time. The sound track of *Ruroni Kenshin*, a popular TV anime series offers songs from different J-pop/J-rock singers, such as Bonny Pink and Hitomi.

Visual kei is a term referring to male Japanese bands or singers who have as their primary focus their appearance and dress style. Members of visual kei bands usually have striking make-up, with lipstick and dyed hair in unnatural colors, and wear unusual clothes. This unique feminine look of visual kei grabs people’s attention and attracts adolescents and young women in Japan. The visual kei phenomenon began back in the late 80s with the big hit of a visual kei band, X Japan. Although the music genre of visual kei finds its root in 70s Glam rockers and 80s hair bands in the UK/US, like KISS and David Bowie, it is now known for its sophisticated, flamboyant, unique fashion and makeup in the global communities. Visual kei attracted many young women who are interested in cosplay, goth-like fashion, and anime conventions in the U.S. The main reason why visual kei established its place in 90s is their fans’ network through the Internet communities. Four out of six JFL students in the current study told me that they are attracted to visual kei bands, especially the one called Malice Mizer (see Figure 3). The guitar player in this band, Mana, is known for his crossdressing and Gothic Lolita (“GothLoli” for short) fashion. In the figure 3 Mana is the man with blue lips on the left.

Figure 3. Visual kei band, *Malice Mizer*



Cosplay and Gothic Lolita

Cosplay (コスプレ, “kosupure”) is a contraction of the English words “costume play,” dressing as characters from anime, manga, video games, SF films, and visual kei bands. I had one student who used an anime character’s name in her everyday life, including in the Japanese class I taught. She had her own website with the character’s name with many cosplay pictures from anime conventions she had attended all over the U.S. In Harajuku and Akihabara, a famous area for street fashion and an electric town in Tokyo, there are some cosplay cafés where waitresses serve customers in their cosplay outfits.

Gothic fashion combined with Lolita fashion is called GothLoli. Gothic style is usually the Victorian style of women’s clothing. Lolita fashion is girly, cute style that is popular among a certain group of teenagers in Japan. A recent Japanese film, “*Shimotsuma Monogatari*” (*Kamikaze Girls*) by Tetsuya Nakashima (2004) is a good introduction to Lolita fashion (<http://www.shimotsuma-movie.jp/>). The popular magazine *Gothic & Lolita Bible* often features Mana in the visual kei band, Malice Mizer. In 1999, Mana established his fashion label, Moi-

meme-Moitie (<http://www.rakuten.co.jp/moi-meme-moitie/>) providing elegant GothLoli clothes and accessories, and he helped to spread the popularity of GothLoli.

Video Games, RPGs

I refer to any video games such as Sony PlayStation 2, the Nintendo GameCube, and computer games as “video games.” Video games have a wide variety of genres, from action and puzzles to RPGs. Role Playing Games (RPGs) are a type of video game that is narrative based, and equally popular among male and female players. The *Final Fantasy* series are the best known Japanese RPGs, and three out of four female students said they were fans of this particular game series at the first meeting of the discussion group meeting. These games have an anime art style with high visual quality and a complicated narrative that is similar to manga.

Final Fantasy’s popularity affected the Japanese music industry. Utada Hikaru, who is known as a queen of Japanese R&B, sings theme songs of this series. And Utada released her first full album in the U.S. in 2004. The model of the main character in the *Final Fantasy* IIIIV is known to be Gackt, a visual kei vocalist. Related products such as strategy guides and figures are popular among collectors of the *Final Fantasy* series.

Anime Conventions

It is important to be aware of the connection among anime, manga, video games, J-pop/rock, visual kei bands, and cosplay in understanding the Japanese popular culture phenomenon in the U.S. The anime conventions that are held annually in major U.S. cities are the best place to learn more about these elements of contemporary Japanese popular culture in the U.S. I was surprised when I heard that some major artists in Japan, such as TM Revolution, came to play at anime conventions. The anime conventions are not limited to anime; rather they include multiple aspects of contemporary Japanese society from fashion to music. They usually last at least three

days in a convention center. Many Japanese popular culture fans save up their money, stay in the hotel rooms, and enjoy the whole weekend at the site. I saw many cosplayers who participated in the cosplay competition with their elaborate costumes and makeup, booths selling many different Japanese products, artists who share their pieces and techniques, “gamers” who participated in video game competitions. Anime conventions also offer music concerts and theme song listening/viewing with fan-made video clips.

Procedures of Data Analysis

I transcribed all the interviews and discussion group meetings using the transcription conventions, informed by Ochs (2001) and Rymes (2001), described below.

Table 3. Transcription conventions

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
()	Words in parentheses indicate sounds and transcriber’s comments.
CAPS	Capital letters indicate louder talk
= =	continuity of utterance - follows directly after the preceding one
?	Final rising intonation
...	Falling intonation followed by silence interval
bold	Item of analytic focus
<u>underline</u>	Item of analytic focus

I used discourse analysis (Gee, 1996; Ochs, 1996; Rymes, 2001 & in press) and linguistic analytical methods (Halliday, 1973; Rymes, 2001 & in press) to analyze transcribed data. These methods of analysis focusing on language-in-use in given social situations are connected to theories of discourse and identity (Archer, 2000; Blommaert, 2005). First, I coded the interview

transcripts to sort by the different themes of the talk using open codes such as gender, students' identity framing, and critical stance. I coded multiple data sources such as photographs that participants took, discussion group meeting transcriptions, students' logs and observation notes in similar manner. Second, I pulled out parts of the data that illustrate students' identity framing, popular culture experiences, and critical stance from multiple data sources. Third, I looked at the form and the language use in selected narratives informed by discourse and narrative analysis: 1) Linguistic indexing of affective stance (Ochs, 1996), 2) Indexical pronouns (Halliday, 1973; Rymes, 2001 & in press, and 3) narrative pattern of problematic experience (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Rymes, 2001). I focused on linguistic details that appear to be important by looking at repetitive words, quantifiers (every, all, none), emphatic stress (a lot), and function of pronouns in given social situations. Throughout the data analysis, I thought about how function of the words represents students' identities and critical stance, and how students' discourses were influenced by social factors.

In this chapter, I described the methods I used in my dissertation, pilot study, research participants, process of data collection, popular culture texts used in the discussion group meetings, and procedures of data analysis. I discuss analysis and findings of data in the study in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER 4

DISPLAYING STANCES IN “BEING DIFFERENT” STORIES

“Yeah, like, my mom’s side of the family is like, “You’re so weird. Japanese... why?”

But, yeah, my grandmother just wants me to learn Spanish really badly.”

(Meg’s interview)

Meg told a story during her individual interview about how her family members were not happy with her decision to take a Japanese course in college. Despite the fact that Meg’s family members wanted her to study Spanish, Meg chose to study Japanese because she “wanted to understand what *Gackt* says” (Meg’s interview script). Gackt is a Japanese visual kei singer Meg admires. The key phrases “being different, being weird” were found in fifteen sources of data from different students besides Meg’s comment. The function of these phrases seems to differ depending on who is talking about whom, and it indicates that JFL students distance themselves from other people in the U.S.

In this chapter, I present the data that illustrate students’ shared JFL student identity: being against “small town, mono-cultural, white, middle-class in the U.S.” mentality. I focused on the form/function (Halliday, 1973; Rymes, In press) of language by looking at linguistic indexing of affective stance (Ochs, 1996) such as repetition, quantifiers, emphatic stress, and laughter (Capps & Ochs, 2001; Ochs, 1996). In discussion, I suggest that the participants’ strong group identity overcomes their national identity in some situational discursive practices using the concept of “othering” (Coupland, 1999; Pennycook, 1998; Yamaguchi, 2004).

Background

Social identity is a combination of complex multiple social dimensions (see Chapter 2 for details). In my study, participants are secret fans of Japanese popular culture who are learning

JFL at a college in the U.S. For this particular group, students share certain social identities such as college students, JFL learners, fans of Japanese popular culture, Caucasian, and U.S. citizens. In order to uncover how these students portray their ascriptive identities in given situations, it is useful to look at a linguistic index in discourses and narratives (Ochs, 1996). Halliday (1973) emphasized the importance of functions: what form of the language does and how it does. However, Rymes (in press) argues that the functionality varies across different social contexts. Rymes further explains, “language-in-use (discourse) and social context each influence each other in a dialectic relationship; not only does what we say function differently depending on the social context, but also, what we say changes the social context” (Rymes, in press, p. 4). For example, when someone says “You are weird,” it functions multiple ways, delivering different meanings in given social contexts. In Meg’s comment at the beginning of this chapter, her mother commented “You’re so weird.” This simple statement functions as a judgment about Meg. However, when it is used between close friends, it can function as a signal of their close relationship. Thus, it is necessary to look at the structure of the language, its function, and the social context in order to investigate students’ identity display. Since affective stance illustrates a mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition, and degrees of emotional intensity (Ochs, 1996), I can get a sense of the shared feeling of this particular group of students by looking at linguistic resources that index affective stance. Accepting the idea that affective stance is a “component of social identity” (Ochs, 1996, 424), I investigate students’ use of repetition, quantifiers (every, all, none), emphatic stress (a lot), and laughter. I also pay attention to the way JFL students “select when to display these stances” (Ochs, 1996, 425).

“Being different, being weird”

One thing students talked about was “being different, being weird.” All of the six students had individual interviews prior to the discussion group meetings. I found many personal stories in the photo-elicited interviews since I asked students to tell stories based on the pictures they took related to identity, JPC and language learning. I made sure that I asked every student a question about why they decided to study JFL, since I wanted to know if their interest in JPC influenced their decision to take JFL courses. Out of six students, four of them (Meg, Anna, Lucy, Beth) participated in the discussion group meetings. These students did not know each other prior to the first discussion group meeting, although Meg and Anna had taken my Japanese class together in the past. The key phrases I heard repeatedly from different students were “being different” or “being weird” in answering this specific question. I also found linguistic resources that indicate the theme in several places in the discussion group meetings’ transcripts when students talked about other people in the U.S. This is one way of indicating that students are distancing themselves from the others in the act of complaining and “othering” (Coupland, 1999; Pennycook, 1998; Yamaguchi, 2004). I found examples in my data that suggest students emphasized their common ground with the researcher (Japanese) who does not share the same ethnic background. Furthermore, they homogenized the other people in the U.S. who are outside their groups. I argue that the connection between members of an affinity group can be stronger than group members’ connection with their own racial group in the situation of learning different languages and cultures.

The Linguistic Indexing of Affective Stance

Repetition

The JFL learners shared their personal reasons for deciding to study Japanese during the individual interviews. Emily in the pilot study, and Beth and Meg in the current study mentioned that learning Japanese is “something different” from learning other languages that are more popular in the U.S., such as Spanish and French. Excerpt 3 is an example of such stories from Emily’s interview transcripts.

Excerpt 3. Emily’s “wanted something different” story

- 1 Nacky: What’s the reason why you started learning Japanese?
- 2 Emily: Because I like anime.
- 3 Like... I took Latin for three years in high school.
- 4 And I was tired of Latin.
- 5 And so... I wanted **something different**.
- 6 I wasn’t interested in Spanish and French.
- 7 And I like anime and Japanese seems something fun and
- 8 **different to do, wasn’t ... normal**, you know.

The bolded parts are the key phrases that indicate the theme “being different.” Emily thinks that Japanese is different from other foreign languages such as Spanish and French. She even admits, with a slight hesitation, that she thinks that Japanese is “not normal.” Without looking at the form and the context of this particular discourse, it is difficult to know whether Emily used the word “different” in a positive or negative way. However, Emily’s use of verbs such as “like” and “wanted” illustrates her affective stance. By repetitive use of the verb “like” in line 2 and 7, Emily emphasizes her agency in deciding to learn Japanese. With this situated use

of linguistic resources, Emily expresses her positive stance toward “being different” and being not normal.

Emphatic stress (a lot, so, definitely)

Another example of accepting being different is found in Kate’s “grow up to be different” story. Previous to this excerpt, Kate has been talking about her younger sister, who likes to watch Japanese music videos of visual kei bands with her. To outsiders, such as Kate’s mother, these video clips look scary because of the distinctive visual styles exemplified in the performers’ make-up and hairstyles. Kate describes her younger sister as follows:

Excerpt 4. Kate’s “grow up to be different” story

- 1 Kate: So she has a lot of my influence, I think. (laugh)
- 2 And that’s why she’s, you know, watching music videos,
- 3 these Japanese music videos at like two, and she thinks it’s so cool.
- 4 And my mom comes in and goes, “Aren’t they scary?”
- 5 She’s like, “No, mom. They’re not scary. I like this one.
- 6 He’s my best friend.” We’re going, “**OK.**” (laughs)
- 7 So she’s definitely gonna **grow up to be different.**

In line 1, Kate emphasizes her influence on her sister is fondness for Japanese music, especially visual kei bands, by using “a lot.” In line 3, Kate indicates that her younger sister thinks Japanese visual kei bands are “so” cool by using an emphatic stress. In line 7, the word “definitely” shows Kate’s certainty of her sister’s future, “growing up to be different.” The combination of the use of these three emphatic stresses and Kate’s bolded comment in line 6, “OK,” indicates Kate’s stance towards being different. Not only it is okay to be different, but Kate seems to be excited about the possibility of her sister’s “growing up to be different,” as

indicated by repetitive use of emphatic stress. Considering the fact that Kate and her sister live in the U.S, Kate wants her sister to grow up to be different from others in the U.S.

Indexical Pronouns

Indexical pronouns including pronouns (we, you, they) and quantifiers (every, all, none) are another tool to look at the display of students' stance. There are two different usages of indexical pronouns in my data. Firstly, participants distance themselves from others by emphasizing the situation by using "everyone" and "nobody." Secondly, they use quantifiers such as "all" and "everyone" in the act of complaining about people in the U.S.

Quantifiers (every, all, none)

In Excerpt 5, Emily is explaining why she took a JFL course in college. This follows immediately after Excerpt 1. In this situation, I asked Emily to tell me why she began learning JFL and how her interest in JPC influences her JFL learning. Emily uses a quantifier "everyone" to emphasize the situation as if she was the only person who was taking Japanese classes at the time. In fact, I know it is not true, since I taught the beginning JPNS class that Emily took, and there were about twenty other students.

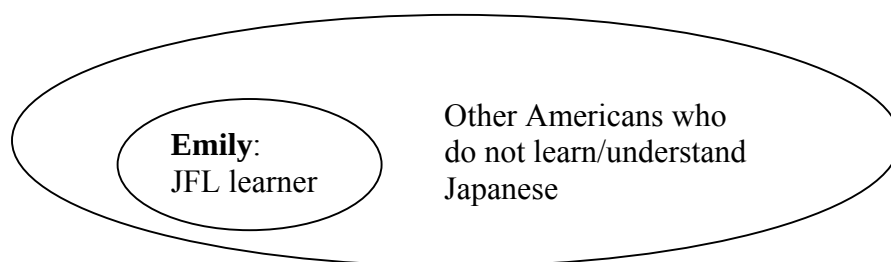
Excerpt 5. Emily's "everyone had Spanish class" story

- 1 Emily: Everyone had Spanish class and French class or German class and
- 2 I'm taking Japanese so I can write something in Japanese and you
- 3 can't understand it.
- 4 With anime, you can like... sometimes you know what they are
- 5 saying without looking at the subtitles.

I underlined the quantifier "everyone" as well as pronouns "you" and "they." In line 1, Emily's use of "everyone" indicates that she feels different from others. Emily's comment in

lines 2 and 3, “I can write something in Japanese and you can’t understand it,” indicates that she enjoys feeling different from other people who are not taking Japanese because of her literacy skills in Japanese. Interestingly, Emily used the pronoun “you” without considering the interviewer, a Japanese native who actually does understand Japanese. This particular “you” in line 2 operates as an emphatic separation from “everyone” and it could be replaced with “they.” On the other hand, Emily uses “you” differently in line 4. This is an inclusive you that can be replaced with “we,” referring to people who can understand Japanese. The pronoun “they” in line 4 indicates the anime characters who speak Japanese. In line 5, Emily also indicates her advantage of having Japanese linguistic knowledge when she watches anime. Emily’s mixed use of indexical pronouns does not indicate that she perceives ethnic difference between the interviewer and herself. Rather, it indicates shared knowledge of Japanese. Emily’s linguistic indexing in excerpts 1 and 3 illustrates that she feels different from others in a positive sense as a JFL student.

Figure 4. Emily’s discursive practice of othering



Within the circle of US society, Emily separates herself as a JFL learner in her discursive practice of othering from other non-Japanese speaking people in the U.S. Figure 4 illustrates how Emily’s social identity as a JFL learner overcame her class and racial identity as a white, middle-class woman in the U.S.

The next example of indexicality is Meg's "nobody knows about it" story shown in Excerpt 6. This is the conversation in the interview when Meg showed a photograph of a soccer goal and uniforms. She explained how she got interested in playing soccer. Previously, Meg was talking about how she was a tomboy who liked to play video games and soccer with her younger brother, although she also took "girly" lessons such as piano, ballet, and horse riding.

Excerpt 6. Meg's "nobody knows about it" story

- 1 R: How come you played soccer?
- 2 Meg: Um, my little brother played it first, and I remember thinking, like,
- 3 "This sport is the coolest sport, and nobody knows about it."
- 4 (laughs) I didn't know that everybody else in the world did, but...
- 5 he played it first, and then I started playing, so, I don't know.
- 6 I just started after, I guess it was kinda like,
- 7 "Oh, he's playing. I wanna play, too!"
- 8 Nacky: But, like, isn't there anything like it's boys' thing or girls' thing,
- 9 anything like that?
- 10 I know soccer is not that popular in America to start with, and not,
- 11 especially for women.
- 12 Meg: I don't know. I, I guess that, um...
- 13 I didn't really ever stop to think, "Oh, that's not a really girly thing.
- 14 I better not do it."
- 15 It was kinda more like, "Oh, that's not really a girly thing.
- 16 Let me do it!" (laughs)
- 17 Nacky: Ah, I see. (laughs)

18 Meg: Except that I did do ballet for a while, so that was kinda girly, but...

19 Nacky: So you were happy not to be a stereotypical girl?

20 Meg: Yeah, and, I was like, “Yeah, soccer!” (laughs)

Meg expresses her joy of finding a sport that “nobody knows about” from her little brother. She refers to soccer as “the coolest” sport, saying nobody in America knows about it. She admits, in line 4, that she was not aware of the popularity of soccer in the rest of the world at the time when she first heard about it. The combination of emphatic stress (the coolest), the quantifier (nobody, everybody), and the verb “wanna” indicate Meg’s affective stance towards something different and rare. In lines 16, Meg raises her voice with excitement and laughs joyfully. She does the same in line 20, saying “Yeah, soccer!” These exclamation marks indicate that Meg’s voice is louder and higher pitched than before. In line 4, 16, and 20, Meg laughter illustrates her affective stance of enjoying being different, a different type of girl playing a different kind of sport from other girls in the U.S. In this excerpt, Meg makes me think of a mischievous child joyfully telling some secrets that “nobody knows about”.

In Excerpt 7, Meg’s “All the guys have trucks” is one example of the act of complaining. Prior to this part, Meg was telling me about the cultural differences she found when she moved from a big city to a small town within the same state in the U.S. Meg describes the small town her family moved to as follows:

Excerpt 7. Meg’s “All the guys have trucks” story

1 Meg: All the guys have trucks, beat-up trucks. (laugh)

2 They probably have shotguns in the back.

3 I wouldn’t be surprised. And everybody goes to church, and

4 there’s a church on every corner.

Meg's excessive use of quantifiers indexes affective intensity that defines the social act of complaining (Ochs, 1996). In line 1, Meg states "all the guys" in this particular small town she lives in have "beat-up trucks," and she assumes that they also "have shotguns in the back." "Everybody" in line 3 and "every" in line 4 also operate to emphasize the situation of this town. This affective intensity does not indicate that Meg dislikes guys with trucks or churchgoing people. Since she already indicated her opinion that being different is a good thing, these quantifiers indicate her negative stance toward the small town mentality of being all the same. Meg also talked about this small-town mentality of sameness in a negative way in the discussion group meetings.

Figure 5. Meg's discursive practice of othering

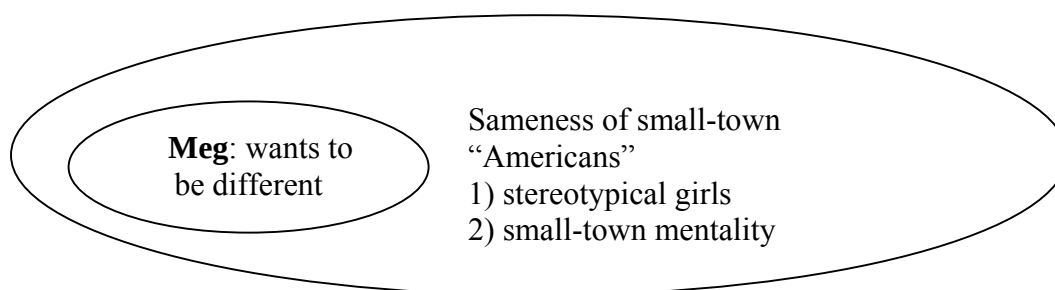


Figure 5 illustrates Meg's discursive practice of othering. Meg clearly shows that she wants to be different, especially from the images of stereotypical girls and small-town mentality. Considering the way Meg displays her affective stance in excerpts 6 and 7, I need to revisit the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter. Now it is clear that Meg is comfortable, even happy, to be called weird by her family members for taking Japanese courses, since it makes her different from everybody else.

In Excerpt 8, Kate shows her negative stance towards the small-town mentality in a similar manner. Here, Kate is recounting her experience when she moved from a bigger city in a

different state to a small town that is in the middle of nowhere. As I described in chapter 3, Kate has several piercings, dyed hair, and distinctive makeup that stands out on campus.

Excerpt 8. Kate's "Everyone is a cheerleader" story

- 1 Kate: Because I came in there and everyone is either, like, a cheerleader
 2 girl or, like, a redneck or something. ((laughs))
 3 It's just, they didn't really know what to make ...
 4 my friend that moved up here with me has kind of a similar look,
 5 and we color our hair and we do, you know,
 6 the different eye makeup and stuff, and so we went in there,
 7 and I wouldn't really label myself as anything extreme, as like a Goth,
 8 but that's what they thought we were when we moved there.

In this excerpt, Kate indicates that she and her friend who moved to the small town with her are different from everyone else by using the pronouns "we." The pronoun "everyone" in line 1 and the word choices of "cheerleader" and "redneck" in line 2, emphasize her position as an outsider in the small town. Excerpts 4 and 8 show that Kate considers that being different is good. Figure 6 illustrates Kate's stance.

Figure 6. Kate's discursive practice of othering

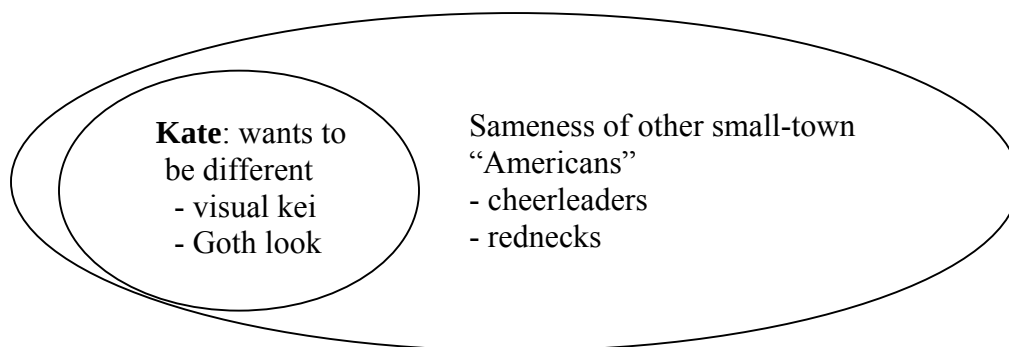


Figure 6 illustrates Kate's stance of wanting to be different from the small-town "Americans." Kate maintains her stance throughout the interview as illustrated in excerpt 4 about her younger sister's story. I can see Kate's consistency with her stance from her Goth-like appearance with colored hair, piercing, and different eye makeup. Kate also encourages her younger sister to be different by watching visual kei bands videos with her. The cultures of Goth and visual kei are not the same thing, but they operate to offer Kate a way to be different, an alternative to being the same as everyone else around her.

Beth had a different take on her stance from other JFL students in her discursive practices since she has lived in Japan for one year as an English teacher. There are two examples of acts of complaint in Beth's data, shown in excerpts 9 and 10. In excerpt 9, Beth shows a unique use of pronouns when she is explaining the picture of her favorite Japanese wind chime, *fūrin*.

Excerpt 9. Beth's fūrin narrative

- 1 Beth: OK. I took a picture of the wind chime, because...
- 2 R: Uh-ha.
- 3 Beth: One thing I really like about Japanese culture is how they pay
- 4 attention to seasons, changing of seasons, because...
- 5 I think it's really cool, we don't really do that here.
- 6 We just stay indoors and turn on the heater or air conditioning
- 7 and pretend like it is not warm or cold outside.
- 8 They really don't use sense of what's going on outside.
- 9 I like the *fūrin* in the summer. I think it's cute.

In line 3, Beth refers to "Japanese" with the pronoun "they." Here she is not including herself in this situational use of "they." In line 5 and 6, Beth refers to "people in the U.S." as

“we” including herself when explaining the custom of the U.S. society that does not pay attention to seasons. However, Beth changes to use of the pronoun “they” referring to people in the U.S. By doing this, she is separating herself from people in the U.S. and their customs, since she has *fūrin* outside her apartment window and pays attention to seasons. This switching indicates her mixed identity as a person who grew up in the U.S. and a JFL learner.

Another example of the act of complaining is shown in excerpt 10, which is taken from Beth’s daily log during the summer of 2004. While the four students were participating in the weekly discussion meetings, they kept daily activity logs related to JPC and language learning. On July 7, 2004, we watched three video clips of JPC to introduce different dialects in Japanese. Anime characters in “Tonari no Yamada-kun” (*My Neighbors, The Yamadas*) speak in the Kansai dialect. A TV drama series “Churasan” is about a young woman from Okinawa who speak in the Okinawa dialect. A weekly local TV program in Kagoshima called “Namaiki Voice” (*Sassy Voice*) introduces local artists, tourist spots, new restaurants and events in Kagoshima. The part I shared with my students was about visiting a pottery village in Kagoshima, introducing traditional and contemporary pottery studios and local artists. Some local potters answered interview questions in Kagoshima dialect while TV reporters spoke in standard Japanese. We watched and listened to the different use of dialects in different situations. Beth introduced some Sanuki-ben (a dialect spoken in Shikoku) and Meg shared her Internet search result about the Ainu dialect spoken in Hokkaido.

Excerpt 10. Beth’s typed log for 7/7/04

Discussion group today. We watched a bit of “Tonari no Yamada-kun” and “Churasan” and a local program from Kagoshima. Very interesting. I wonder why American TV stations don’t have more local programming.

Beth seems to be impressed with the local program of Kagoshima. As we can see in excerpt 9 and 10, Beth often shared this type of reflective thinking, comparing the Japanese and US societies. Beth's experience of living in Japan made her aware of world relations and gave her tools to be critical/objective towards U.S. society.

Figure 7. Beth's discursive practice of complaining

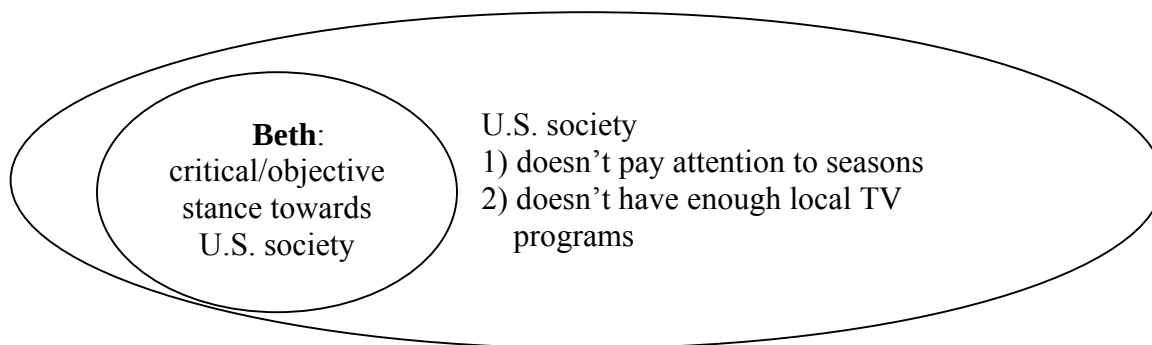


Figure 7 summarizes Beth's critical/objective stance towards U.S. society by comparing it with Japanese society. Beth is complaining about U.S. society for not paying attention to the change of seasons, and for not having enough local TV programs. In other words, Beth is separating herself from other people in the U.S. who are not aware of other worlds.

Discussion

In the preceding excerpts, in which participants were interacting with a native Japanese teacher/researcher/friend, JFL students took a stance of being different from other white, middle-class peers who have a mono-cultural mentality. The analysis of students' discourses suggests that these students have a common belief that accepting being different is one quality of a JFL learner's social identity. The social act of taking JFL is also a way of being different for Emily, Meg and Beth.

Accepting different appearances such as colored hair and distinctive makeup is another way of being different, as Kate illustrated. Kate, Meg, and Beth also show their stance of being

different by supporting Japanese visual kei bands. However, one thing I need to remind myself in the process of analysis is that students' storytelling is situational. I found the act of complaining about some aspects of U.S. society in every student's data. Considering the given situation, a native Japanese teacher and researcher interviewing white, middle class. JFL students in the U.S, there is a possibility that some students might have wanted to portray themselves as motivated students emphasizing their multicultural awareness by complaining about U.S. culture and society. Although the act of complaining appears to be against U.S. society, some data suggest its temporary nature.

In the act of being interviewed by a native Japanese teacher, all of the students portrayed themselves as good JFL students. However, micro-analysis of data suggests the momentary nature of storytelling. For example, Lucy's data showed some inconsistency in her multicultural awareness on the surface level. She made some comments indicating that she was playing the role of thoughtful foreign language student during the interview. Lucy extensively used phrases such as "Learning a foreign language is good. Multicultural awareness is important." At the same time, I found her stance did not go beyond viewing Japan as the "other" culture. Lucy described her childhood friends, a Japanese girl and a girl from the U.S. using "we" and "she." In this context, I found it strange that Lucy introduced a Japanese girl she grew up with, then continued, "We'd go to her house and watch Sailor Moon with her." I was confused with what "we" indicated. It was another girl from the U.S., her best friend, who was included within "we" but not the Japanese girl. I found this use of the indexical pronouns "we" and "she" three times in Lucy's data, twice in the individual interview and once in the discussion group meeting. Although Lucy emphasized the strong friendship between the Japanese girl, her "American" best friend, and herself, her pronoun use othered the Japanese girl to a certain extent.

Yamaguchi (2004) discussed the social construction of others by JFL learners in his dissertation. In this study, JFL students illustrated the discursive practice of othering according to their national background, which indicates homogenization. However, the JFL students in my study emphasized their common ground with the researcher (Japanese) and othering the others in the U.S. I need to point out the power of community of practice in an affinity group since the biggest difference between Yamaguchi's and my studies is that the JFL students in my study gathered to participate because of their shared interest in JPC. Another point is that the JFL students in Yamaguchi's study had studied Japanese over three years, while my students were at the beginning level of Japanese study (1-2 years, mostly) except Beth. In a way, Beth set the tone of a positive attitude toward Japanese culture and society which influenced the community of practice. I will discuss Beth's strategic use of agency and reflexivity further in chapter 6.

As I discussed in this chapter, JFL students share a stance of being different from U.S. social norms. In the following chapter, I continue to discuss discursive othering of JFL students, focusing on issues of gender representation.

CHAPTER 5

DIVERSITY OF GENDER REPRESENTATION

People would be like, “Man, you are really dressed up, why?” (laugh)

And I would just say, “Oh, I just really like it” (laugh)

So, it’s just fun to get people to talk to you because you’re just **different**.

It’s also fun to see people just jump to a conclusion about you based on how you dressed.

(David)

This is a part of David’s individual interview transcript. David often dresses up in Goth style inspired by visual kei fashion because, as he says, “I just really like it.” For David, his appearance means one thing, while he is viewed with a different meaning by outsiders. I see a connection between the way David expresses himself in visual kei fashion and the way metrosexuals express themselves by dressing differently from conservative masculine men. This short segment of interview data shows David’s challenging stance towards certain people who judge him based on his appearance, and it also sets the tone for JFL students’ attitudes that I discuss in this chapter.

The theme of “being different” is salient, as I discussed in chapter 4, throughout the data. In the previous chapter, I looked at the students’ discursive practices of othering and found that JFL students share the stance of being against the white, middle-class, mono-cultural mentality in the U.S. In this chapter, I investigate the gap between the JFL students’ individual identities and the way they are perceived by other people, using the concept of inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) and self-othering (Coupland, 1999). I also discuss how students challenge and question social hegemonies in the U.S. related to representation of gender and

sexual orientations through their talk and action in the context of JPC such as Sailor Moon and visual kei.

Background

The concept of self-othering

David, Meg, Kate, and Beth are big fans of visual kei (literally, visual “type” or “style”), a Japanese originated music genre where members (mostly men) dress in unique outfits, wear makeup and dye their hair. To understand the reasons these JFL students are attracted to visual kei, I use theoretical concepts of self-othering (Coupland, 1999), inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005), and metrosexual (Simpson, 2002; Simpson 2003). In the context of Japanese popular culture, JFL students talked about representation of gender as questioning the social norms in the U.S.

As I discussed in chapter 4, the boundary for discursive practice of othering is not limited to racial background. Some JFL students who are affiliated with Japanese popular culture such as anime and visual kei showed more concerns for their affinity group than their ethnic background. In fact, there are several examples of students’ talk that illustrate their attitude of distancing themselves from people in the majority group. Further, this act is an active “self-othering”; outgrouping themselves from the rest of the society as “a form of social comparison” (Coupland, 1999, p. 8). I find that what David does is similar to what metrosexuals do, expressing themselves in whatever ways they like, even though it is against the social norms of what men are supposed to wear in the U.S.

The concept of inhabitable/ascriptive identities

The act of dressing differently shown in David’s excerpt requires consideration of the ways others view him, which sometimes does not match with David’s idea. Many cosplayers

inspired by visual kei, video games, and anime encounter this same situation: the gap between their idea and intention and the way people think about them. This happens basically to everyone. However, these cosplayers purposely make their identities visible. Why do these people dress in unique ways? The concept of inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) is useful to theorize these situations. Inhabitable identity is how the subject understands his/her appearance, what impression s/he seeks to make indicating affiliation to a certain group. Ascriptive identity is how the subject looks to other people. David dresses differently just because he likes it and he thinks it is fun to see people jump to a conclusion about him based on how he looks. For David, it is just an appearance and it is not completely who he is. However, he has experiences of having people judge him according to his appearance. Later in this chapter, I explore reasons why David still wants to dress in a certain way after all.

Metrosexual

A British journalist, Mark Simpson, coined the term “metrosexual” in his article “Here come the mirror men” in 1994 in the *Independent*. The definition of metrosexual is: “a heterosexual male who is in touch with his feminine side—he color coordinates, cares deeply about exfoliation, and has perhaps manscaped” (Wikipedia, 2005, p.1) and “a man with money and an interest in fashion and beauty who lives within easy reach of a city” (Simpson, 2003). “Manscaping,” meaning landscaping the male body, is a word derived from a TV program in the U.S, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. The term, metrosexual, first emerged as a satire on consumerism, but it “was appropriated by consumerism to hasten the process it sought to critique” (Simpson, 2003). Metrosexual was voted as the 2003 Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society as one of “the words which most colored the nation’s lexicon, or otherwise dominated the national discourse” (Wikipedia, 2005, p. 1). According to this award,

“metrosexual” is defined as follows: a fashion-conscious heterosexual male or, as coiner Mark Simpson put it, a man who “has clearly taken himself as his own love object.” One thing I want to make clear is that the original definition did not include homosexual or bisexual men as metrosexual. This is because the term indicates men who have attributes common to homosexuals and bisexuals, but are not specified with any sexual preferences. Thus, metrosexual, homosexual, and bisexual men have similar styles and tastes except for their sexual preferences. The notion of metrosexual gave young heterosexual men a language to free themselves from the image of homosexual and bisexual men, while doing what they want and buying what they like.

The problem is that Simpson widened his definition of metrosexual in his 2002 article, in which he explained, “He [a metrosexual] might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference” (Simpson, 2002). The bottom line is that the term metrosexual and the aesthetic associated with it does not necessarily entail being gay or not. I argue that the style of visual kei bands has the appearance of being metrosexual without any connotation of being gay in Japan. In fact, the definition used in a translated book, *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man* (Flocker, 2003) is widely accepted among the Japan-based online communities. This definition clearly states that metrosexual men are interested in self-image, but they are heterosexual. I also argue that the visual kei movement from Japan influences the transitional period of widening male gender representation. The young women who follow visual kei men are seeking a diverse representation of gender. These women want men who are feminine, fashionable, clean, and as sensitive as stereotypical gay men. In fact, young women aged 18 to 25 are the main audience and fans of visual kei in Japan. However, the fans of visual kei are both men and women.

It is also important to point out that the anime conventions are key to the popularity of visual kei. Many anime and video game fans in the U.S. have opportunities to explore multiple aspects of Japanese popular culture such as visual kei, J-rock, cosplay, and manga after they start going to anime conventions (Fukunaga, 2000). David is one of these fans who started out with playing video games and watching anime, and became a big visual kei and cosplay fan after attending some anime conventions. I only had women in my study as participants before I met David. Some of the female students are attracted to visual kei men and metrosexuals. I added David as a participant in my study since I found he, as a homosexual man who likes visual kei, is an interesting case to compare with women's perspectives.

Introducing David

David is 19, a college undergraduate student at South University majoring in education. He wants to teach English in high school in the future. David is a studious and responsible JFL student who comes to class early enough to sit in the front row, close to the teacher. He was a freshman in college at the time of data collection for this study, but he was in JPNS 2002, the fourth semester of Japanese since he had studied Japanese for three years in high school. David first played video games with his two brothers when he was little. He started watching anime on TV such as *Ronin Warriors* when he was in 5th or 6th grade. He also started reading manga, but he liked playing video games best until he saw many cosplayers at an anime convention. Then, David started liking visual kei and cosplay better than video games. From a theme song by Hamasaki Ayumi in a video game, *Thousand Arms*, David began exploring Japanese music through Hamasaki Ayumi's link pages and found visual kei. David is attracted by Mana's costume and style in Malice Mizer (マリスミゼル) the most among visual kei. David started dressing up in visual kei and Goth-like fashion in everyday life and participated in anime

conventions as a cosplayer. Although David has multiple interests in Japanese culture, the main reason he took a JFL class in high school was the high chance of academic success in a small class. In his high school years, he enjoyed swimming, ballroom dancing, sewing, cosplay, anime conventions, video games, and being president of the Japan Club. David led different activities related to Japanese culture, such as making “manekineko.” He made an elaborate dress inspired by visual kei fashion as a graduation project during high school. In the class I taught, David did an excellent cultural presentation about visual kei bands wearing a visual kei outfit and makeup on his tall, slender body. David also is honest and open about his sexuality as a gay man. One day in the small group oral session, I asked my JFL students about Valentine’s day gifts as a way of practicing a grammar point about “give/receive” in Japanese. David said “Watashi wa boyfriend ni tennis racketto o agemashita” (I gave my boyfriend a tennis racket). Later in the interview, David explained to me that he should not have to hide it, but he would not be a exhibitionistic gay person who goes around talking about his boyfriend all the time. David sometimes wears makeup and black nail polish that reminds me of the Goth look and visual kei bands. I wonder what the distinction between Goth and visual kei is.

Visual kei

Visual kei (literally, “visual type”) describes a genre of Japanese rock (J-rock) where members who are mostly male dress in outrageous fashions. The purpose of the unique fashion and makeup is to grab the audience’s attention and stand out from the crowd. Visual kei originated in Japan in the 80s although it finds its roots in UK and US rock scenes such as the glam rocker, David Bowie, in the 70s, and hair bands such as KISS in the 80s. X-Japan, one of the pioneers of Japanese visual kei bands, was a huge hit in the early 90s with heavy makeup and dyed hair that might resemble Goth, punk, and heavy metal. Today, the genre of visual kei is

established with its own unique characteristics. Popular visual kei bands and artists include Malice Mizer, Gackt, and Dir en Grey. The uniqueness of visual kei is that their fashion and styles vary from flamboyant, evil and gothic looking, to feminine looking. Makeup and lipstick are common in visual kei, as you can see in Mana, a guitar player in the popular visual kei band, Malice Mizer (see figure 3, Chapter 3).

Although Malice Mizer disbanded at the end of 2001, Mana has been active in a new visual kei band, Moi dix Mois (モア ディス モア). Mana is a man who dresses up in a fashion that breaks the social norms of gender differences in clothing. Mana has his original fashion brand and shop, Moi-meme-Moitie (モア メーム モアティエ), described as “Elegant gothic lolita aristocrat vampire romance” in the online store. Mana’s fashion coordination from head to toes is the center of attention of many cosplayers and visual kei fans. Mana is often featured in a popular Japanese gothic and Lolita magazines (“gothloli” for short) that many Japanese and non-Japanese cosplayers read. Although Mana, as a visual kei artist, is popular for his distinctive fashion taste, some visual kei artists do not keep their style for a long time. A former vocalist of Malice Mizer, Gackt used to dress up with heavy visual kei makeup and costumes when he was in the band. However, Gackt sings more pop/J-rock songs with toned down visual kei style—a pair of tight black pants, dyed hair, and light makeup—since he became a solo artist in 1999. Thus, the popularity of visual kei bands created a new marketing strategy for musicians and producers in Japan: using the visual kei concept to get audience attention at the beginning of their career as the big J-rock band Glay did. Glay first came out as a visual kei band whose members all wore a certain makeup, but later they abandoned their visual kei appearance. Thus, there is diversity in the music and appearance of artist, identified as visual

kei. In the U.S., the anime conventions and the Internet operate as an accelerator of the hybridity of visual kei, gothloli, and cosplay cultures.

Findings

David's use of language

In the interview, David talked about his favorite visual kei artist, Mana. How Mana is influencing David's everyday life became salient through his talk. David sewed a pink dress inspired by Mana's costumes as a high school graduation project. David is more interested in Mana's fashion than his music, and he has dedicated himself to becoming like him. In excerpt 11, David describes his favorite visual kei band, Malice Mizer, especially the guitarist, Mana.

Excerpt 11. Mana's fashion

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | Nacky: | So, when did you... you said, the pink dress was inspired by the |
| 2 | | visual kei. |
| 3 | David: | Uh-ha. |
| 4 | Nacky: | Is that Malice Mizer mainly? |
| 5 | David: | Uh-ha. I am a big fan of Mana. I <u>really</u> like all of his different |
| 6 | | costumes. The other guys, they are pretty cool, but I really like |
| 7 | | Mana's costume because they are more... classier . |
| 8 | | I guess, they are not as crazy as = |
| 9 | Nacky: | = Yeah |
| 10 | David: | = others, and they are really elegant . |
| 11 | Nacky: | Yeah, sophisticated. |
| 12 | David: | Uh-ha. Yeah. It's <u>really</u> neat that he is <u>SO</u> good at makeup and |
| 13 | | costuming because, <u>I swear</u> , <u>for years</u> , I didn't know he was a guy |

- 14 until I really started looking into the bands more, researching
 15 singers and stuff?
 16 Nacky: No, he doesn't look like a man.

This is just one example of David's unique word choices throughout the interview data. Here, David uses "different, classier, elegant, really neat" (bolded) describing Mana, a male visual kei band guitarist who dresses up in women's costumes and dresses. David also used words such as "flamboyant, artistic, carnival-like, bizarre and not crazy" in other data. David uses different adjectives and adverbs that are not commonly used by teenagers. His word choice appears to be one way of showing his identity, wanting to be sophisticated. David's sophisticated manners and word choices mirror those of Mana. The underlined parts show David's frequent use of emphasis. David "really" likes Mana's fashion (line 5) and thinks it's "really" neat (line 12) that Mana is "SO" good at makeup (line 12). As David describes Mana, he gets more excited, as we can see in the raised intonation and louder voice in "SO" (line 12). In line 13, David uses the more exaggerated expressions "I swear" and "for years" emphasizing the uniqueness of Mana. These emphasizing words show David's fascination with Mana, especially with the uniqueness of Mana's fashion. David is influenced by Mana not only in terms of appearance but also in terms of his identity: he wants to be different and wants to make his difference visible.

David talked about the problematic experience of being judged by others because of his appearance. I analyzed David's narrative using the narrative pattern of problematic experience (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Rymes, 2001). The general outline is as follows:

1. Abstract
2. Setting/problematic experience
3. Response (psychological/physiological)

4. Consequence

5. Coda

David related his problematic experience of being judged by a stranger “based on how you dressed.” His storytelling followed this pattern: an abstract, followed by the setting and problematic situation, the first response, another problematic situation, the second response, a third problematic situation, the third response, and the consequence of all the interactions. He wrapped up the story with a coda, expressing his thoughts and reflecting upon this experience.

Excerpt 12. David’s problematic experience

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--------|---|
| 1 | <i>Abstract</i> | David: | It’s also fun to see people just jump to a conclusion about you, |
| 2 | | | based on how you dressed. |
| 3 | <i>Setting/</i> | | Because like, that happened to me last week, Thursday. |
| | <i>problematic experience</i> | | (explaining where he was on campus in detail) |
| 4 | | David: | I was just going to class, mind just doing my own business, and |
| 5 | | | this guy was coming towards me, he was like, “You know, you |
| 6 | | | look like some kind of 18 th -century undertaker.” |
| 7 | <i>1st response</i> | | I was like, “ Oh well, yeah, that’s how I was trying to look. ” |
| 8 | | | (laugh) |
| 9 | | | And he said, “You know, I used to dress up like that too, back |
| 10 | | | when I was living in California in an apartment complex with |
| 11 | | | transvestites and heroin addicts and Satan worshippers. Then I |
| 12 | | | found Jesus, and I stopped dressing that way.” |
| 13 | <i>2nd response</i> | | I was like, “ Oh right, sure man, whatever ”. |
| 14 | | | And he goes “You know you should try it sometime.” |

- 15 *3rd response* I was like “**Actually I am Catholic, I go to mass every Sunday**
 16 *Consequence* **at the Catholic student center.**” And he kept looking at me and
 17 said, “Yeah, you look like one of those too.”
 18 Nacky: What?
 19 *Coda* David: So, it’s **interesting** to see what people say to you. Because, I’ll
 20 never see him again, so what he says **doesn’t bother me**. But I
 21 **couldn’t BELIEVE** that he had the nerve to say something like
 22 that to someone he had never met before.

The bolded parts indicate David’s feelings, his affective stance. In line 1, David describes the problematic experience of being judged by his appearance as “fun.” The first label David was given by a guy on the campus street was “18th-century undertaker.” David reacts to this initial judgment with a cynical comment and laughter, as described in line 7, “that’s how I was trying to look.” The stranger attempts his second labeling with his assumption that people who dress like this must not believe in God. David reacts to this with the second response, “Oh right, sure man, whatever” (line 13). The discourse marker “whatever” indicates that he is bothered, but he is not going to take any course of action (Cameron, 1995; Schiffrin, 1987). The stranger pursues his evangelist Christian mission with the third attempt in line 14, “You know you should try it sometime.” Finally, David, annoyed with the man, shows his real feeling by his use of “actually” in line 15, and by revealing that he is religious in line 16. In this context, “actually” operates to express disagreement softly (Taglight, 2000). It is a precursor to a statement that contradicts the other speaker. David’s different reactions indicate his attempts to keep his distance from the stranger who tries to judge him based on appearance. David’s and the stranger’s negotiation process is a struggle between David’s effort to keep it cool, not to be upset, and the stranger’s

effort to get involved with a person who seems to be non-Christian. As a consequence, David succeeded in stopping the man from talking for a while as the underlined part, “he kept looking at me” in line 16 indicates. In the coda, David describes this experience as “interesting” in line 19 and “doesn’t bother me” in line 20, but he was certainly upset with what this man did at the same time. We can see this in his emphatic use of “couldn’t BELIEVE” in line 21.

The excerpt 12 shows David’s mixed feelings. If he does not want to be judged by his appearance, why does he dress differently? The answer is simple. His desires to be honest about what he likes and to express what he wants in his fashion are stronger than his desire to be accepted by everyone. David wants to make his identity visual. However, David is not trying to be antisocial; rather, he wants to be accepted with his inhabitable identity (Blommaert, 2005). The next excerpt is an example of David’s challenge to make his identity visible through talk. Excerpt 13, when David explains his stance about the problematic experience, follows a few lines after excerpt 12.

Excerpt 13. “He is still the same guy”

- | | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 23 | David: | It’s pretty fun. I think it’s pretty fun to do that. Then you can dress |
| 24 | | up like that and you can <u>still</u> act like yourself. So people have to |
| 25 | | challenge themselves just because he LOOKS really weird but the |
| 26 | | same person, he is <u>still</u> a normal guy. So I think it’s good, if I just |
| 27 | | go to class, and people are like “Oh yeah, it’s just David” |
| 28 | Nacky: | (laugh) |
| 29 | David: | Even if he’s dressed weird, he is <u>still</u> the same guy. You know. |
| 30 | Both: | (laugh) |
| 31 | Nacky: | just having fun. |

32 David: It's just fun to do.

The bolded parts indicate David's choice of verbs in this excerpt. First, David compares two actions, "dress up like" and "act like" in lines 1 and 2, as if these two verbs indicate two different identities. In fact, these verbs seem to present his multiple identities, whether he was aware of them or not. He "dresses up like" visual kei, but he can still "act like" himself. The talk about his appearance and his real self illustrate that these are both David's identities. However, David thinks it is fun to see people's reaction when their assumption is wrong. This is the gap between inhabitable and ascriptive identities as Blommaert (2005) discussed. What David understands is how his appearance is ascribed differently by other people. A person like the man in excerpt 10, who has strong assumptions about others, gets "challenged" (line 25) by David and has to rethink his assumptions. David does not really enjoy meeting these people. Rather, he thinks it is fun to see their reactions when their assumptions based on how he is "dressed" (line 29) are challenged by David's actions. In other words, his appearance does not necessarily indicate everything about David's identities. In excerpt 11, David uses "still" (underlined parts) repeatedly to make the point that appearance does not exclude all the possibilities of who he really is.

David negotiates his identity as a visual kei fan, a normal guy, and a religious person, through his discourses analyzed in excerpt 12 and 13. In the interview, David also talked about his homosexuality. I asked a question that I had in mind in the interview: How do goth look, Catholicism, and homosexuality go together? Excerpt 14 is David's answer to my question.

Excerpt 14. Goth, Catholicism, and homosexuality

1 David: I think that's like, I guess, it's any kind of community, if you

- 2 consider Goth a community? Then you've got a religious Goth
 3 people, I guess like me, who go to church, believe in God and do
 4 things like that, and you've got people who feel **they** are rejected,
 5 against society? **They** are mean, antisociety, or antagonistic or...
 6 just mean spirited overall, that's the way to put it. Uh, just because,
 7 I think the reason gay and Goth connect, is that as a general rule,
 8 Goth people **accept just about anything**.
 9 Like, "Oh, we are **all pretty different**, so **whatever**."
- 10 Nacky: Yeah
- 11 David: So, that's why **a lot** of people get involved in Goth culture. But I
 12 think it is divided even further than that. Because like, there is still
 13 the religious kind of Goth and stuff like that, agnostic slash atheist,
 14 kind of Goth, so.
- 15 Nacky: I hear that from anime people too, anime subcultures.
- 16 David: Uh-ha. Yeah.

First, I look at indexical pronouns in excerpt 14. In line 4 and 5, David uses "they," which indicates his attempt to separate himself from this particular group of people. Although David sometimes dresses in Goth cloths, and is seen by others as part of the Goth community, he shows that he is not one of the "mean spirited" (line 6) people. Second, quantifiers such as "anything" (line 8) and "whatever" (line 9) are used to show David's positive stance towards the openness of Goth culture. In line 11, David states that "**a lot** of people get involved" in Goth. This type of emphatic stress indicates David's perspective towards the Goth community: that "a lot" of people "get involved" with their choice in Goth culture since Goth "accept just about

anything” (line 8). The use of emphatic stress is also salient in line 9, “we are **all pretty** different.” Overall, excerpt 14 illustrates David’s belief about Goth culture: that it “accepts just about anything” (line 8) as opposed to the man in the excerpt 12, who is narrow-minded and wouldn’t accept people who dress in a Goth style. Because Goth people accept just about anything, many people get involved in Goth culture. Figure 8 is a collection of David’s words and phrases used to describe a Goth community in David’s narrative.

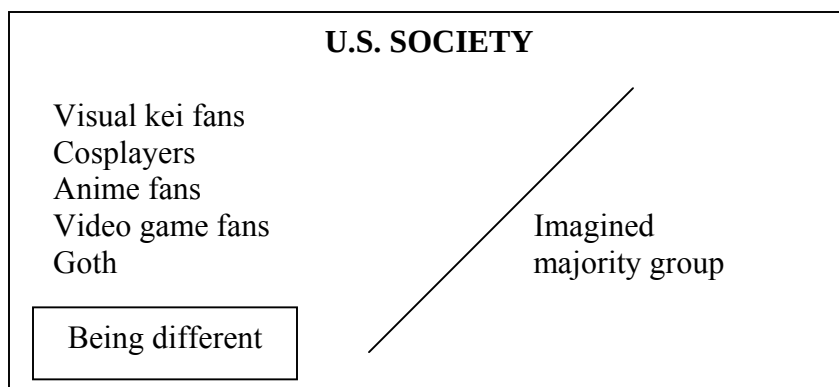
Figure 8. Goth VS other in David’s narrative

GOTH	OTHER
Religious	?
Rejected	
Against society	
Gay	
Accept anything	
All pretty different	

To make it clear, David does not consider himself as Goth, although a Goth identity is ascribed to him by people in the majority group in the U.S. This is again the gap between David’s inhabitable and ascriptive identities. Figure 8 shows how David views people in a Goth community as “all the same because we are all different” which leads to a contradiction. How can something that is not unified accept everything? David’s discourse leaves other communities and people unidentified. Thus, David’s description of Goth community creates an imagined other, and it is parallel to anime fans’ discourses in the pilot study.

David’s comments in lines 8 and 11 in excerpt 14 and figure 8 made me think of how anime fans talked about wanting to be different as well as accepting people who are different. Figure 9 illustrates my understanding of inhabitable/ascriptive identities from JFL students’ talk.

Figure 9. Inhabitable/ascriptive identities



People who belong to the left side of the group have one thing in common: being different/weird in positive and negative ways. Although people on the left side of people in figure 9 consider themselves with different inhabitable identities, such as visual kei fans, cosplayers, anime fans, video game fans, and Goth, they are often perceived as Goth by the majority group. This is because Goth is widely known in the U.S. compared to visual kei and others. According to David, Goth people are tolerant toward people who are different. Thus, David dresses in visual kei with some Goth elements, although he does not consider himself Goth. This point leads to discussions of Japanese popular culture by other JFL students. As I discussed in chapter 4, JFL students share an identity of wanting to be different from the white, middle- class social norms in U.S. society. However, this is an imagined other that consists of different things in different situations such as sorority girls, “red necks,” and small-town mentality. In the next section, I share some examples of tolerance that Japanese popular culture offers to JFL students in their talk.

Frustration with “Americanization” of anime

In the pilot study, all three participants showed frustration or anger with “American” versions of anime. This “American” version is anime shows that are dubbed into English and

compromised in some ways under strict U.S. censorship and time constraints in order to be broadcast on U.S. television. All three participants watch only original anime in Japanese with English subtitles in order to avoid dealing with the problems of dubbed versions. Ted explained that “they change things around” in dubbed versions because of strict censorship on TV in the U.S. Emily and Sean were frustrated with the “American” version of *Sailor Moon* because it tried to hide aspects of the story depicting same-sex romantic involvement. *Sailor Moon* was a popular anime series in the early 90s, and it was broadcast on the Cartoon Network in a dubbed version.

Figure 10. *Sailor Moon* © Takeuchi Naoko, Kōdansha, TV Asahi, Toei Dōga



In the first season of *Sailor Moon*, there were two male characters who had a relationship. According to Sean, one of them was very feminine looking, so “they turned HIM into HER. They gave him a woman voice actor and it looked like woman, and you couldn’t tell the difference unless...” you watch the original anime. Sean said, “I remember my SHOCK when I found out about that. I was like, NO WAY!” The deceptive treatment of particular parts of anime in the “American” versions made Sean begin comparing original anime with the dubbed versions.

In the current study, JFL students who participated in a discussion group (Beth, Lucy, Meg, Anna) talked about *Sailor Moon* as a provider of diverse representations of gender and sexual orientation that U.S. animated TV programs do not offer. First, Anna and Lucy found it appealing that *Sailor Moon* offered a woman as a super-hero, not as a counterpart of *Superman*. The characters were also of her age group, middle school to high school age. Secondly, this group of JFL students also pointed out that the U.S. version of anime does some sugar-coating of original anime from Japan. The following are two excerpts from the transcript of the first day of one discussion group meeting. In excerpt 15, Beth clearly shows her frustrations, pointing out that sake in *Dragon Ball Z* is changed into water, and *Sailor Moon* is targeted for the 13 and up age-group in the U.S. version of anime.

Excerpt 15. Sake changed into water

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Beth: | They are not allowed to show drinking alcohol in children's |
| 2 | | cartoons. I remember in some episode of <i>Dragon Ball Z</i> , the |
| 3 | | master... is drinking. |
| 4 | | But it was digitally changed, the color was blue, so that it looked |
| 5 | | like he was drinking water. |
| 6 | | “Yeah, it's water with that head!” |
| 7 | | I eventually gave it to my cousin, but I had a <i>Sailor Moon R</i> movie. |
| 8 | | I wanted to have an unedited Japanese sub-titled version. |
| 9 | | and that's what I bought. And at the back, it says “Recommended |
| 10 | | for 13 and up.” |
| 11 | | “This is Sailor Moon, in Japan, it is for 6-year-old girls. And here, |
| 12 | | 13 and up, here?” |

- 13 It has some violence?
- 14 I think it is **interesting**.
- 15 **They** make all these editing things in America.

The problem Beth points out here is that the U.S. version did not want to show drinking of sake—and how weird it is that the guy starts acting drunk “with that head” (line 6), just from drinking water. The strict censorship is to the point of changing the story of anime and compromising it in meaningless ways. And Beth sarcastically explains the different targeted age group of *Sailor Moon* in Japanese and U.S. versions. Beth uses an indexical pronoun “they” in lines 1 and 15 indicating U.S. television producers who edit anime under the U.S. censorship guidelines. This use of “they” shows Beth’s discursively self-othering herself from these television producers. Beth is clearly frustrated with these changes. The underlined part in line 13, “It has some violence?” with a rising intonation indicates Beth’s ironic attitude. In line 14, “interesting” does not function as a positive comment; instead, it shows Beth’s strong resentment against “all these editing things in America” (line 15). The next excerpt immediately follows after Beth’s comment in line 15.

Excerpt 16. Editing and dubbing

- 16 Lucy: I don’t know... I used to think Japan is more **straight** way.
- 17 Not necessarily **conservative**, but more **proper** I guess, you know,
- 18 the kids have to wear uniforms. And it didn’t seem to be so **open**.
- 19 But I see now **we** are the one who is doing all the editing and
- 20 dubbing and ...

From line 16 to 18, the bolded adjectives indicate Lucy’s image of Japanese and U.S. societies. She says that she used to think Japan is not necessarily “conservative” but more

“straight” and “proper.” In line 18, Lucy’s choice of the word “open” indicates her comparison strategy of U.S. society being “open” instead of Japanese society being “open.” Inspired by Beth’s opinion, Lucy admits that U.S. society, in terms of censorship on TV, is not open. In line 19, Lucy shares her opinion using the inclusive indexical pronoun “we,” indicating U.S. people. The contrast between Beth and Lucy’s use of these pronouns illustrates that they situate themselves at different distances from “other” culture, in this situation, Japanese culture. Considering Beth’s background, spending one year as an English teacher in Japan, she feels somewhat closer to the Japanese culture than Lucy, who thinks of Japan as the “other” culture, distant from U.S. culture.

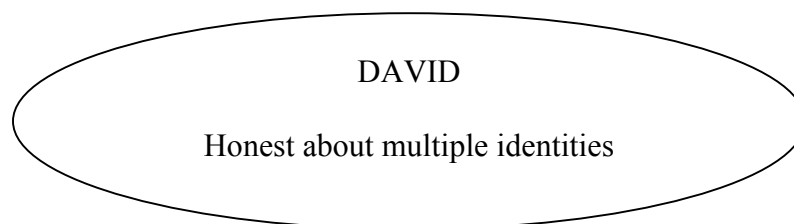
In summary, the change in the characters’ sexual orientation resulting from strict censorship on TV in the United States made students appreciate the original anime more, and question what they see on media in the U.S. The discussion about these issues made it clear to them that U.S. society is not open regarding certain issues such as gender and sexuality representations within the context of popular culture. The hidden part of *Sailor Moon* also reminded JFL learners to stay critical toward U.S. cultural norms. Questioning the dubbed versions of anime is one example of JFL students learning to think critically about U.S. cultural norms through seeing and appreciating the value of “other” cultural norms. JFL students gain new perspectives through experiencing anime.

Discussion

David crafts his identity with his language. His distinctive word choice describing Mana provides an example. He talks differently from other teenagers, and he dresses differently in Goth-like, visual kei fashion. These factors create a paradox: David wants to get noticed, but he does not want to be judged based on what he wears. Living with this paradox means situating his

identity somewhere between two unacceptable extreme positions. At one extreme, he could conform to mainstream culture, blending in so as not to be judged. At the other extreme, he could dress outrageously and become a social outcast. From his talk, it is clear that he does not want to participate in either of these extremes. He wants to be honest about who he is and what he wants to do. However David was upset about how he was labeled in a certain way by a stranger, because he did not wish to be a complete social outcast. He wants to belong. Fortunately, there are communities such as Goth, anime, visual kei fans, and cosplay that accept just about anything, including David. Thus, he has a place to belong. It is important to emphasize that David does not want to be a social outcast. He simply wants to make his identity visual. His language and his appearance help him to do so without deceiving himself. David is honest about the multiple identities within himself and wants to admit their existence to other people (See figure 11).

Figure 11. David's identity



David is honest about his identities as a visual kei fan, cosplayer, gay man, religious man, and a normal man. The common ground of visual kei, goth, cosplay, and anime is that they accept things that are outside of orders of discourse in the U.S. Metrosexuality also adds another layer to these communities that tolerate difference. Meg is crazy about Gackt, a visual kei artist who is beautiful and cool. As more women are attracted to metrosexual men, more straight men dress up like gay men. This phenomenon provides a hope for creating a space for the coexistence of different sexualities: homosexual, bisexual, straight, and metrosexual, where people are not

judged solely by appearance. Thus, metrosexuality gives a medium of alternative gender representation to everyone. Although we need to be aware of the consumerism at the base of this idea, the term and the aesthetic have been absorbed into global culture in a way that transcends simple consumerism.

According to JFL students, Japanese popular culture, with its representation of beautiful men in anime and visual kei, already offers a kind of space where multiple identities can exist. One aspect of anime, the display of homosexual relationships in *Sailor Moon*, made the JFL learners question the current attitudes about sexual orientation in the United States. I argue that JFL students developed critical thinking skills through their interaction with anime and with other anime students. First, they learned to critique media representations in the U.S. Since they watched *Sailor Moon*, these students have begun to question what they see on TV. This is an important point for critical media literacy (Kellner, 1995). Second, JFL learners described how they started questioning the norms of their own culture through experiencing anime. If they had never had opportunities to watch *Sailor Moon*, they might not have noticed the display of homosexuality in anime across different cultures and might not have seen how original texts or textual elements were altered on the basis of ideological assumptions. Anime may provide tools for teachers to illustrate how students need to be critical of what they hear, what they see and what they experience in everyday life, instead of hiding things from them without explaining in the name of taboo. Moreover, anime fans have a community in which to discuss issues that are taboo in U.S. society. The critical awareness is an important aspect in multiliteracies. On one hand, human rights of gay and lesbian are protected although it is restricted to present homosexual couples in anime on the T.V. broadcast in the U.S. society. On the other hand, human rights of gay and lesbians are restricted in Japanese society, although the representation

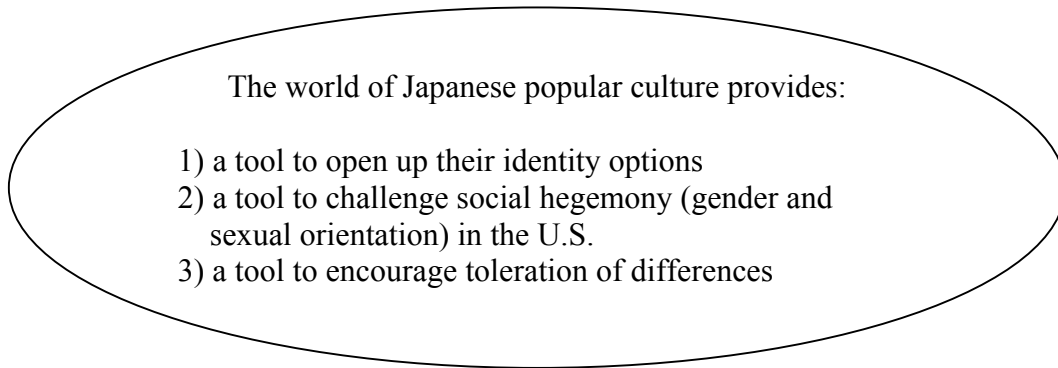
of homosexual couple is accepted in media in Japanese society. Talking about this kind of social contradiction helps to raise critical awareness. Anime viewers explore and challenge things that are not yet possible to do in real life. This creates the critical nature of anime. Napier suggests that “[A]nime does not simply reflect society, it problematizes aspects of the dominant social culture” (Napier, 2001, p. 24).

Figure 12. Popular culture in Japan and the U.S.

Popular culture in Japan	JPC in US television
- Representation of homosexual couple (<i>Sailor Moon</i>) - Representation of Drinking Sake (<i>Dragon Ball Z</i>)	- Dishonest representation of other culture - appropriated other culture to fit orders of discourse in the U.S.—no drinking allowed in cartoons

Figure 9 shows the summary of appropriation of Japanese popular culture in the U.S. Japanese popular culture provides students a way to search for their identities. People can express their identities through JPC, and explore the possibilities. There is a critical aspect to Japanese popular culture: it provides opportunities to see various representations of gender and sexuality that are not in the orders of discourse in U.S. society. Understanding how anime from Japan is appropriated and dubbed into a different cultural representation provides JFL students helpful tools to raise their critical awareness about media. This critical thinking is available for JFL students who search and take time to watch both versions of anime, the original Japanese one and the U.S. dubbed version. The following is a figure that illustrates what Japanese popular culture provides for these students.

Figure 13. Japanese popular culture



Japanese popular culture offers JFL students different options for their identities that will lead them to tolerate differences in society. It offers a woman as a hero, as in *Sailor Moon*. It also offers different relationships in anime, a guy-guy relationship that has been transformed into a guy-girl relationship to fit U.S. network television guidelines from F.C.C. It provides a different appearance and diversity in gender representation in visual kei, as in Mana. Japanese popular culture also provides a tool to challenge social hegemony and give its audience opportunities to challenge the status quo. By following visual kei bands, students challenge gender hegemony/norms in U.S. society, which leads to a wider conception of gender representation. JFL students are not using Japanese popular culture only to study JFL. Rather, they seek their identities, different options, and critical thinking through the talk in the context of Japanese popular culture. I believe the concept of metrosexuality, with its possibility to blend in with other options such as visual kei, anime, Goth, and gay culture, is an optimistic view of the future.

CHAPTER 6

NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES: THE CASE OF A SUCCESSFUL JFL LEARNER

The previous chapters have illustrated how JFL students in this study share the stance of being different and being against social norms in U.S. society. When these students talk about U.S. society, they have a shared identity as white, middle-class JFL learners who are interested in JPC. Therefore, they have certain understanding of the norms in U.S. society. However, when you are living in a foreign country, you might not share norms with people surrounding you. Beth, the most successful JFL learner in this group, has spent one year in Japan, and shared her problematic experiences and how she dealt with them in the interview. She has been learning Japanese for over five years and kept her positive stance toward learning Japanese language and culture. This is not always the case for JFL learners who spend some time in Japan (Yamaguchi, 2004). In this chapter, I present Beth's meta-reflexive use of agency in social contexts by investigating how Beth framed her identity and negotiated it at the same time.

Background

Identity and agency

My understanding of identities focuses on their shifting and multiple natures in different social situations, as I mentioned in chapter 2. Individual agency has a great influence on how identities are shaped and recognized in given social contexts. I understand individual agency as one's personal control and effort to be recognized as having a certain identity in given situations through social interaction. I discuss two narratives Beth shared with me at the individual interview that illustrate how she seemed to be in control of her agency in the problematic situations in a foreign country, Japan. When JFL students encounter problems in their own country, they might be able to use reflexivity as a problem-solving tool from their past

experiences. However, students need to have some understanding of orders of discourse of Japanese society when they are facing problems in Japan. In such situations, it is difficult to be “reflexive” since you might not have any similar past experiences on which to reflect. The way Beth successfully gained acceptance in Japanese society does not seem to rely solely on her language skills. Rather, it has more to do with how Beth chooses to present herself in a given situation using her agency. The concept of inhabitable/ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) is useful to understand the situations Beth narrated in her stories. Inhabitable identity is the identity that the subject regards as his/her own according to voluntary affiliations, while ascriptive identity is the way the subject looks to others. Thus, there is often a gap between inhabitable and ascriptive identities. However, individuals like Beth carefully select how to present themselves in given situations using individual agency.

Three modes of reflexivity

Archer’s (2003) concept of analytical dualism suggests that the process through which an individual is recognized by society can be influenced by individual agency. Furthermore, the use of reflexivity on different levels determines the level of an individual’s agency. I agree with Archer’s point that individuals can influence how they are recognized in society. Archer’s model of three modes of reflexivity is a useful tool to investigate how Beth kept her agency in given situations (See Chapter 2 for details). Archer suggests three modes of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, and meta-reflexive. These modes of reflexivity can “mediate socio-cultural constraints and enablements in quite distinctive ways and represent entirely different ‘stances’ towards social structures and cultural systems” (Archer, 2003, p. 165). In other words, these labels are ways of understanding the processes that people use to have agency in society. In this study, I focus on looking at the types of reflexivity JFL students use through their storytelling in

the context of research interviews, popular culture discussions, and journal entries. However, I only discuss these different modes of reflexivity as situational and contextual. Therefore these students can engage in different types of reflexivity in different situations and contexts.

Situational identities are not essential definitions of people. In the following section, I am going to look closely at Beth's use of language, pattern of discourse, and evidence of internal conversation to determine what type of reflexive being Beth portrays herself as through her talk.

The definitions of "otaku"

As the popularity of Japanese popular culture, especially anime, increases, the Japanese word "otaku" is getting to be known by many anime fans worldwide. In the JFL class I have taught, I met a few students who called themselves "otaku" jokingly. Sometimes I am not quite sure if these students know what this term indicates in the Japanese context. Otaku literally means "you" or "your house/home" in Japanese. In the late 70s and 80s, this term was used to describe people who had knowledge and enthusiasm about certain areas such as anime or TV idols (singers who sell their image and appearance as a product). In the early 90s, horrible crimes were committed by Tsutomu Miyazaki, who was an otaku. When the police arrested him, they found hundreds of anime videos, child pornography videos, and anime figures in his apartment. These crimes changed the notion of otaku and people began to use this term with a negative connotation such as "anime-obsessed nerd who is an absolute social outcast." However, the meaning of this term has been shifting in recent years, especially in the academic context. In the areas of sociology and consumer economy, there are several books and articles written about the power of otaku groups in the postmodern Japanese society (Azuma, 2001; Kitabayashi, 2004). Some anime otaku people in the U.S. use the term to empower themselves within their affinity groups.

Beth shared her knowledge and understanding of the different definitions of otaku in Japanese society and in U.S. society in the interview. Before this storytelling occurred, Beth showed me a picture of her CD collection and told me how much she liked going to karaoke with her Japanese friends in Shikoku when she was working as an assistant English teacher. Beth told me that she hid her identity as an anime fan at first because she didn't want her Japanese friends to think that she was otaku. I asked a question: Is there a difference between the word otaku in Japan and in the U.S.? Beth answered the question as follows:

Excerpt 17. Beth's perspective on otaku

- 26 Yes, there is a difference between how the word is used. Because uh ...
- 27 I guess the word came to America just by, through anime.
- 28 Particularly "*The Otaku no video*."
- 29 This is an anime by studio Gainax.
- 30 That is sort of a parody of anime, anime fans in Japan.
- 31 It's pretty funny, it's not the best but....
- 32 So, it's called "*Otaku no video*" and... the video company translated like,
- 33 as a "*Fan's video*." So, people started using *otaku* meaning fans.
- 34 If they liked anime, it wasn't the most important thing.
- 35 But they thought that otaku is like a Japanese word for fans, which doesn't include
- 36 negative connotation in English.
- 37 But you know, then, there were several crimes in Japan with otaku,
- 38 and some people started realizing that in Japan, it was not a positive term.
- 39 So, they didn't want to be called otaku anymore.
- 40 But there is a difference between the two.

- 41 In America, it usually means JUST anime.
 42 In Japan, can't it be like Motor cycle otaku or, like a military otaku... or something?
 43 You wouldn't really think of using the term otaku in that way in English, because
 44 it's so... most of the people think of anime, when they think of otaku.

According to Beth, the term otaku simply means “anime fan” in the U.S. However, Beth was aware of the negative connotation of otaku in Japanese society that is epitomized by Tsutomu Miyazaki's crimes. Beth believes that it is dangerous for U.S. anime fans to call themselves otaku without knowing the negative connotation that might hinder their social relationship with Japanese people. Based on Beth's opinion, I created figures 14 and 15 to show the different definitions of the term otaku in Japanese and U.S. societies.

Figure 14. Position of otaku in Japanese society

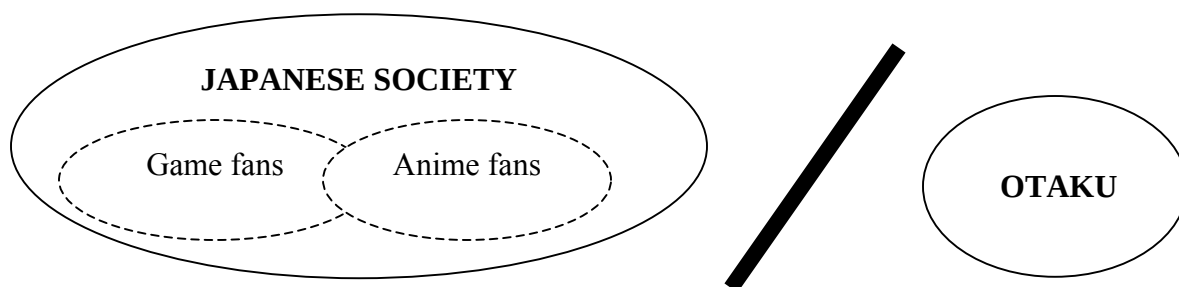


Figure 15. Position of otaku in U.S. society

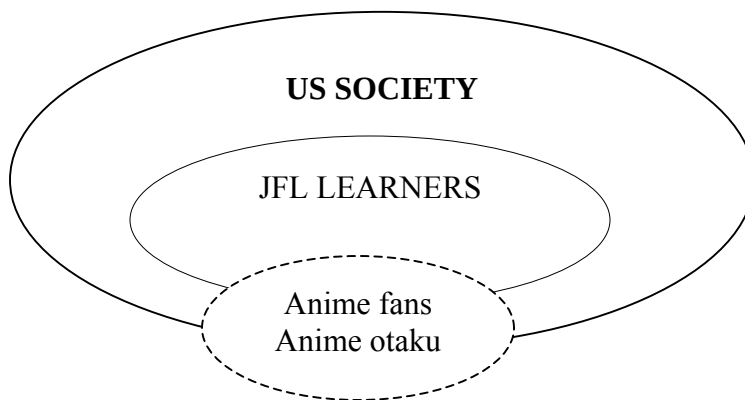


Figure 14 illustrates that otaku is considered to be totally separate from the rest of the Japanese society, although anime fans, video game fans, any type of fans are included in the circle. This is how Beth describes her image of otaku in Japanese society. On the other hand, anime fans and anime otaku can be within the circle of JFL learners as well as U.S. society (figure 15). There is no definite line separating anime fans and otaku in the U.S. society. These figures indicate that Beth understands that there is a gap between Japanese and U.S. societies with regard to their perspectives on otaku.

The problem

Some JFL students who are big fans of anime might be excited about knowing the term otaku, whether they are aware of the negative connotation of the term in Japan or not. If these students introduce themselves as otaku in Japanese to non-otaku people, some might assume that they are socially inept or they are social outcasts. In 2003, I met a Japanese exchange student in the U.S. who refused to be a conversation partner with JFL learners who are anime otaku. She specifically asked me not to sign her up with any anime fans/otaku saying “anime otaku wa iya desu (I don’t like anime otaku).” I realized that some Japanese people have such strong antipathy towards otaku. Although some anime fans use the term otaku differently, in an empowering way, just as gay people call themselves “queer,” they might face difficult situations when they go to Japan to study Japanese.

Yamaguchi’s study (2004) portrays two JFL college students who show their essentialized views of Japanese society in their discourse after spending one year in Japan as exchange students. I also know a few JFL students who stopped studying Japanese after coming back from one-year study abroad in Japan. For JFL instructors, finding a way to support students who are going to study abroad is a challenge. Not every JFL student keeps a positive stance

towards Japanese society, but there might be a way to prevent them from turning their backs on JFL learning completely. Beth's narrative as a successful learner suggests how she frames her storytelling to keep her agency in given problematic situations.

Introducing Beth

Beth is a graduate student of art history, pursuing a master's degree in South University. She is a 25-year-old woman from a white, middle-class family in the south of the U.S. She studied JFL for two and a half years as an undergraduate student in a different university before she went to Shikoku, Japan, to teach English through the JET program (Japan Exchange Teacher program) for one year. About one year after coming back from Japan, She started her graduate school at South University and took 4000-level (the highest) Japanese classes to brush up her Japanese skills. Beth is interested in anime, manga, video games, *Final Fantasy*, J-pop, J-rock, visual kei, karaoke, tea ceremony, cooking, and calligraphy. Her understanding of Japanese culture and society was deeper than that of the other participants since she had lived in Japan. Beth has been studying Japanese for over five years while the other participants have studied it for one to two years. Therefore, Beth's Japanese is the strongest among the discussion group members, and she often played a teacher-type role in the discussions. Beth talks fast in a calm voice, choosing words carefully. Beth rarely uses exaggerated expressions, unlike another student, Lucy, who has a tendency to use highly colored expressions.

Narrative Pattern

When storytellers explain certain problematic experiences and situations, the storylines have certain patterns that indicate emotions, stance, and actions (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Rymes, 2001). I used Ochs & Capps' (2001) explanatory sequence pattern and Rymes' (2001) "dropping-out story" outline as models. The general outline of Beth's narratives is described in

Chapter 5. Telling problematic experiences usually begins with explaining an initial event as an abstract, then explaining the setting and the problematic experiences and situations. Then, the storyteller tells about her/his physical or psychological response to the event, followed by the consequences caused by the response. At the end, storytellers often, but not always, wrap up the story with a coda.

Beth's "Otaku" Narrative

In the interview, Beth explained how she first hid her identity as an anime fan from her Japanese friends when she went to karaoke in Japan, because she was aware that the term *otaku* has a negative implication in Japan which was not the case in the U.S. Everytime she went to karaoke with her Japanese friends in Japan, she sang some anime theme songs performed by big-name music bands such as JUDY AND MARY ("Judimari" for short) and L'Arc-en-Ciel ("L'Arc" for short). Eventually her friends pointed that out. By the time her Japanese friends figured out that all the songs Beth was singing were related to anime, they had established personal connections and understanding of each other, so her friends accepted her as she was.

Excerpt 18. Beth's otaku narrative 1

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 <i>Abstract</i> | Beth: But... umm. Uh, I tried to... I knew some Japanese songs |
| 2 | already, because I, <i>I liked anime</i> . And I would download |
| 3 | the opening and closing songs of my favorite anime. |
| 4 | Sometimes buy some CDs too (laugh). |
| 5 <i>Setting/</i> | But <u>I realized</u> this would be a problem because <u>I didn't want</u> |
| 6 <i>problematic situation</i> | them to think <u>I was... otaku</u> . |
| 7 | <u>I didn't want</u> them to have <i>a bad impression</i> of me. |
| 8 <i>Response</i> | So, I realized that some of the songs were performed by, |

internal conversation that illustrates how she frames her talk about selecting a time and place to show her identity as an anime fan. Beth revisits her experience related to otaku by telling her personal story. By looking at the way she frames her story, I found some indications of how Beth wants to portray herself in this research interview. The next two examples show how Beth intentionally and strategically uses her agency in the problematic situations, looking at her affective and epistemic stance.

The following discourse, excerpt 19, immediately followed excerpt 18. Although I had a common understanding about the negative aspect of otaku, I wanted to hear Beth describe this issue with her own words.

Excerpt 19. Beth's otaku narrative 2

- 17 Nacky: Why you didn't want them to think you were otaku?
- 18 Beth: Um... They don't have a really good reputation, do they?
- 19 I guess, I also wanted to show that I was interested in more than
- 20 just anime, because... um... there are lots of really annoying
- 21 people who are just interested in anime, you know, and they
- 22 think that's all Japan has to offer.
- 23 So, I didn't want to seem like I was one of those people.
- 24 Because I really WAS interested in other things like calligraphy
- 25 and... tea ceremony.

I asked Beth the reason why she didn't want her friends to think that she was otaku. The language Beth used to answer the question shows her affective stances. First, Beth made sure that we were on the same ground by mentioning that otaku do not have a good reputation. Line 18, "do they?" indicates that Beth treated me as an insider who shares the knowledge of what

otaku connotes in Japanese society. It also indicates the way Beth portrays herself as a careful person through her talk by giving me a chance to step in if I had any objection. In line 19, Beth “wanted to show” her stance, distancing herself from “annoying people who are just interested in anime.” The use of emphasis words such as “lots” and “really” in line 20 shows Beth’s strong contempt for people who think anime is the only thing that Japan has to offer. The use of “just” operates as a dividing line between people who are “just” interested in anime and people who are interested in “more than just anime.” In line 23, “didn’t want” clearly shows that Beth knew what she wanted and what she didn’t want. In line 24, the emphasis words “really” and the stressed “WAS,” again, illustrate her agency. After excerpt 19, I asked a question about the different use of otaku in Japanese and U.S. societies, and Beth answered as in excerpt 1. The following narrative, excerpt 20, is Beth’s detailed explanation of her strategy.

Excerpt 20. Beth’s otaku narrative 3

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 45 | Beth: | So, originally it came out without much of bad connotation |
| 46 | | and then people started to hear that it wasn’t a very good idea |
| 47 | | to call themselves otaku in Japan, so... |
| 48 | Nacky: | You were <u>very</u> aware of that. |
| 49 | Beth: | Yeah, so I <u>didn’t want</u> people to think I was |
| 50 | Nacky: | But when they found out that you were singing anime songs, |
| 51 | | did they change their attitude toward you? |
| 52 | Beth: | So I <u>knew</u> that they would eventually find out that I liked anime? |
| 53 | | But I just <u>wanted them to</u> ... get a chance to know me first. |
| 54 | Nacky: | I see. |
| 55 | Beth: | <u>I didn’t want to be like</u> this is the crazy anime fan from America. |

- 56 I wanted it to be like “Oh she likes volley ball and calligraphy
 57 and, you know, she teaches English.
 58 Oh, by the way, she likes anime.”
 59 I wanted it to be a part of WHO I WAS not the overarching
 60 defining characteristic. I didn’t want to be stereotyped.
 61 **But because I have spent a lot of times with them, and I have...**
 62 like I joined the town volleyball team =
 63 Nacky: = Oh yeah? Town volleyball?
 64 Beth: And lots of other things.

In this excerpt, Beth summarizes her strategy and the reasons why she wanted to separate herself from so-called otaku people. In line 48, I pointed out that she was “very aware” of the negative impression of otaku in Japanese society. Beth answers “Yeah” and explains that she didn’t want people to think of her in that way. The bolded part in line 50 and 51 is my question about her friends’ attitude towards her after they found out about her interest in anime. Interestingly, Beth did not answer this yes-no question immediately. It seems like she began stating her strong stance of being in charge of the situation reflecting on her internal conversation instead of answering the question. Beth’s language use in line 49, shows her affective stance. However, her use of the verb “knew” (line 52) shows her epistemic stance. This is a change of attitude and also evidence of her “self-monitoring” (Archer, 2003, p. 256). Instead of just wishing the situation to be a certain way, Beth reveals that she knew that she would not be able to hide her identity as an anime fan forever, and she intentionally used her agency to avoid being stereotyped. In line 53, Beth “wanted them to” know her first. In other words, she created a situation for her friends to know her before they made any judgment. In line 55, 56, and 59, Beth

explains that she knew what she wanted the situation to be. The climax of this discourse is in line 59 and 60. Beth puts a stress on “WHO I WAS” indicating that the way she is viewed by others is important for her. Line 60, “I didn’t want to be stereotyped,” is the climax of this long personal storytelling on the issue of otaku.

Beth’s otaku narrative (excerpts 18, 19, and 20) indicates a possible reason why secret anime fans hide their identities in classrooms. The concept of inhabitable and ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) is useful to understand Beth’s situations narrated in her stories.

Figure 16. Inhabitable/ascriptive identities in Beth’s otaku narrative

Inhabitable & Ascriptive Identities	
<”I”=inhabitable>	<”them”=ascriptive>
- like anime - interested in more than just anime - Not otaku - like other things (calligraphy, tea ceremony, volley ball)	- otaku = a bad impression - the crazy anime fan from the U.S. - overarching defining characteristics - annoying

Beth described her inhabitable identities in “I” statements illustrated in figure 16. Beth was aware of her ascriptive identities, and described them in “them” statements. There is often a gap between inhabitable and ascriptive identities, and Beth’s narrative offers one way of filling this gap by using meta-reflexivity effectively in given situations. The secret anime fans in classrooms might use their meta-reflexivity to avoid being labeled.

Beth’s strategic use of agency in the otaku narrative

Beth first hid her identity as an anime fan to avoid being labeled as otaku. She selected when and how to reveal her identity as an anime fan and created a chance for her friends to get to know her real nature. If Beth were going to hide her identity completely, she shouldn’t have sung

any anime songs at karaoke with her friends. With her strategic use of her agency, Beth did not have to lie to her friends. In the end, Beth and her Japanese friends successfully established a friendship and they just laughed about the situation.

Figure 17. Analysis of Beth's otaku narrative

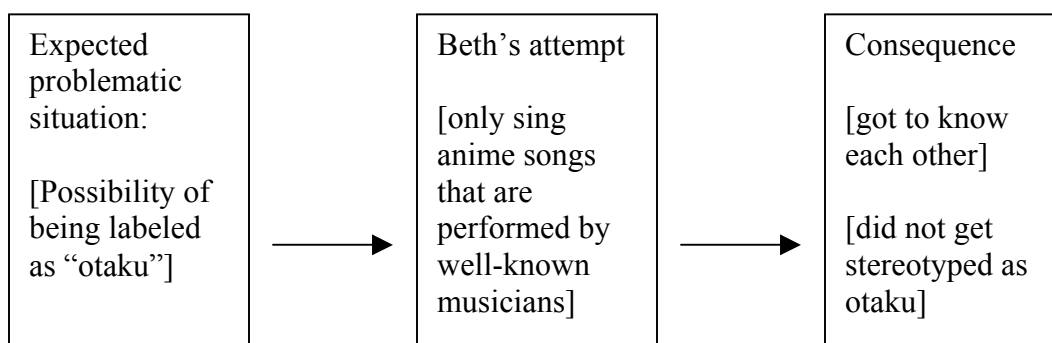
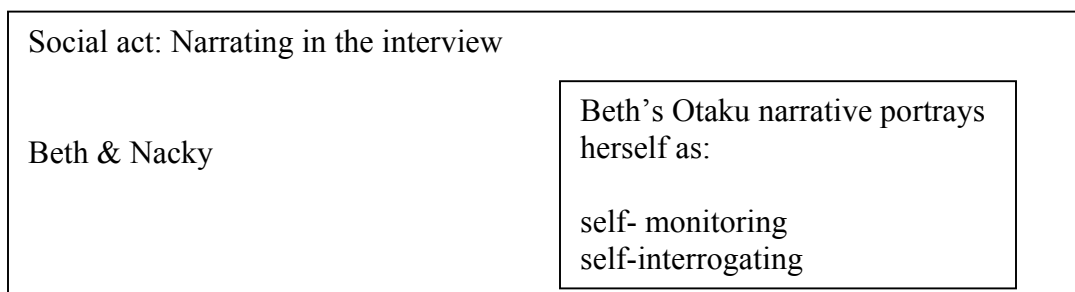


Figure 17 shows the process of Beth's storytelling. Beth narrated her karaoke experience beginning with a possible problem she might have faced, being labeled as otaku. Then, she explained her attempt to prevent the worst-case scenario. Finally, Beth's effort paid off and it helped her to keep her agency. The following figure 18 illustrates Beth's meta-reflexive use of agency.

Figure 18. Beth's strategic use of agency in the otaku narrative



In the social act of the research interview, Beth told a story about her karaoke experience to a Japanese native, Nacky. Within her narrative, Beth constantly described herself as being

self-monitoring: being careful with the way she presents herself to others and being aware of the possible ways she might look to others. In other words, Beth is aware of the gap between inhabitable and ascriptive identities (Blommaert, 2005) in given situations. Beth is negotiating how her identity as an anime fan is viewed in Japan. Beth did not hide her identity as an anime fan, but she also stressed that she liked other cultural aspects of Japan, such as the traditional tea ceremony and calligraphy. When Beth told this narrative at the interview, she reflected on what had happened in Japan. However, Beth's careful description of her self-monitoring indicates that she is not just reflective; rather, she is a meta-reflective thinker in the context of the research interview. Furthermore, Beth tells otaku narratives in the interview as if she is a detective, telling a story about the interrogation process of this incident objectively. Thus, I identified that Beth portrays herself as being self-interrogating in the narrative.

In the next section, I share another example of Beth's narrative, her third gender narrative. Unlike the otaku narrative, Beth describes herself as trapped within different social constraints. Although Beth had control over when to show her identity as an anime fan in the previous narrative, she felt that she had less power over how to be judged based on her appearance as an "American woman."

Beth's "Third Gender" Narrative

In the interview, Beth showed me a picture of a Japanese dictionary she had received as an award in a Japanese speech contest in the U.S. She started by explaining what she talked about in her speech, and told me the following problematic experience she had at a school event in Japan.

Excerpt 21. Beth's third gender narrative

1 *Abstract* Beth: And also... it's... different to be an American woman in Japan?

2 I think. Maybe... from American man or a Japanese woman?

3 *Setting/* Because... I talked about this experience I had out of the

4 *problematic situation* school... event.

5 They were... The teachers were setting up.

6 Men were moving tables and women were making tea.

7 So, I thought... I was... you know, I'm pretty strong, so I

8 went to move the tables.

9 "Oh, no no no no. This is, this is too hard for women to do,

10 why don't you go over there to make tea?" (with a lower voice)

11 Nacky: Men's job. Men's job. Is that it?

12 *Response* Beth: I was **a little** pissed off. (laugh)

13 OK, I just really wanted to help and I wanted to fit in.

14 You know, I was pretty new at school...

15 So, ok, I will go... do the tea thing.

16 So I went to make tea, and women were like, "Oh no. You

17 don't have to do that. You know, women in America don't

18 have to make tea, why don't you go and help the men?"

19 So, I was... I don't know what to do.

20 *Consequence* And so... men were **a little more** "*shitsukoi*"*

21 So, I ended up helping the women... making tea in the end.

22 *Coda* It was **a kind of** a difficult (laugh) experience.

23 Because I wasn't... I was too...

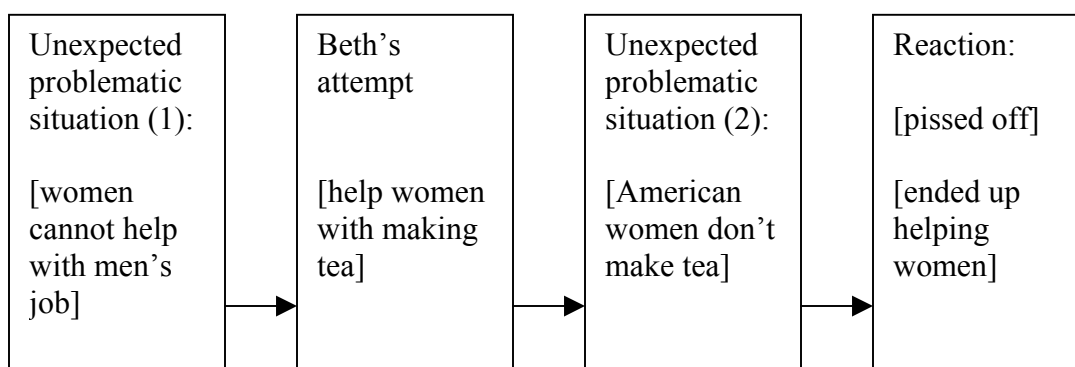
24 I couldn't move the table because I was a woman, but I

- 25 couldn't make tea because I was American.
- 26 So it was like, um, I was in the third sex.
- 27 I was not quite a male or female.
- 28 Nacky: Interesting.
- 29 Beth: It's sort of in the middle. Um...
- 30 Nacky: No place to be...
- 31 Beth: Yeah.

**Shitsukoi*: persistent, high-pressure, pushy

Beth starts out the storytelling with an abstract, being an “American woman” in Japan is different from being a man from the U.S. or a Japanese woman. Then Beth begins explaining the problematic situation and the setting of the school event in Japan. Beth wanted to help other teachers because she wanted to fit in, but her offer was rejected twice. Beth responds to this situation by being “pissed off,” but she continues to offer to help. As a consequence, she helps women with making tea in the end. In the coda, Beth analyzes the social norms of being a woman and being an “American” in Japan. The analysis of the discursive process of Beth’s third gender narrative can be seen in figure 19.

Figure 19. Analysis of Beth’s third gender narrative



The discursive process of Beth's third gender narrative is different from her otaku narrative. In the otaku narrative, Beth was in control of her agency and she strategically chose when to show her identity as we can see in figure 17. However, in the third gender narrative, Beth seems to be stuck between two problematic situations. The first problem is the gender norm in Japan that women are weak. The second problem is Japanese women's stereotypical view of women from the U.S., who do not make tea. However, Beth was not left in total misery since she was aware of these gender norms and national stereotypes in Japan (figure 19). Now, let's investigate Beth's affective/epistemic stance and internal conversation by looking at her use of language in the third gender narrative.

Beth was upset when her offer to help with moving tables was rejected by Japanese men. Considering Beth's careful choice of vocabulary throughout her data, using the word "pissed off" in line 12 indicates Beth's extreme frustration in this particular situation. She continues to explain her emotion by using words like "really wanted to help" and "wanted to fit in." From line 13 to 15, Beth talks very fast, showing her affective stance of frustration. In line 15, she shows her unwillingness to help make tea as indicated by the phrase "do the tea **thing**." Beth is actually interested in the tea ceremony, so she would not mind helping making tea in a different situation. However, she was clearly unhappy that Japanese men treated her as a weak woman who cannot help move tables. On top of the first rejection by Japanese male teachers, Beth was unexpectedly rejected once again by the Japanese women. Now Beth faces a lost feeling of "I don't know what to do" in line 19 and she admits that it was a "difficult experience" for her in line 22. One important thing to remember here is that Beth did not just give up trying to fit in at the new school environment. She "ended up" (in line 21) helping make tea because the men were more persistent with their attitude of not letting her help moving tables. In other words, the men were

more strongly against the idea of challenging gender norms. In line 24 and 25, Beth reflects on her given social position, restricted by being a woman from the U.S., using “couldn’t.” She felt like she was in “the third sex” (in line 26), different from being an “American” man or a Japanese woman in Japan.

The bolded parts in excerpt 21 indicate that Beth is using these phrases to mitigate her judgments. In line 12, Beth adds “a little” in front of a rather strong choice of words “pissed off.” In line 20, men were “a little more” pushy and persistent than women. And in line 22, Beth uses “kind of” to soften her description of her difficult experience. All these three choices of words could be replaced by more extreme description such as “very” or “extremely.” Beth’s word choices illustrate her attitude of not exaggerating the situations by keeping a moderate tone. I discuss this point further in the following section.

Beth’s strategic use of agency in the third gender narrative

In Beth’s third gender narrative, there is a tension between being woman and being “American” in Japanese society. As a woman from the U.S, Beth seems to be between a rock and a hard place. Despite of all these problems, Beth succeeded, to a certain extent, at fitting in with this group of women who were making tea after challenging the social hegemony. Beth could have been “pissed off” at both of the parties, the Japanese men and Japanese women, and could have just left to avoid the difficult situation. What kind of strategies did Beth use in this situation?

Figure 20. Beth's strategic use of agency in the third gender narrative

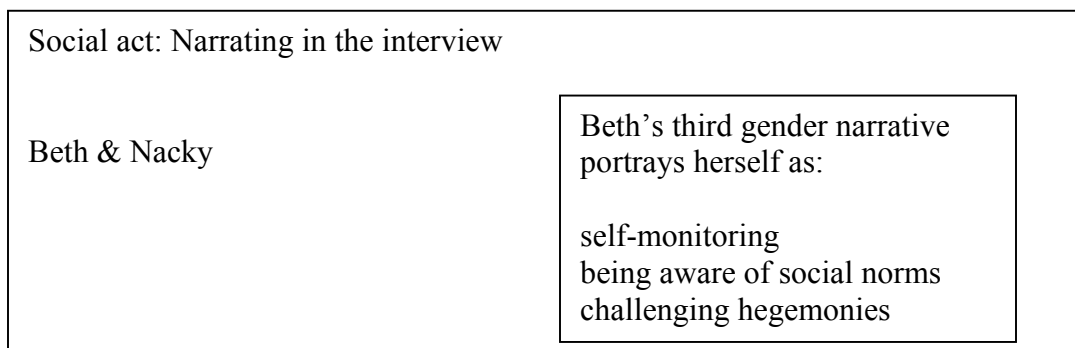


Figure 20 illustrates how Beth used her agency as a meta-reflective being. Even when Beth was in a socially constrained situation, she did not lose her agency completely. Beth did not take these situations personally since she was aware of social norms and hegemonies in given situations. Her use of agency helped her to challenge hegemonies instead of giving up on communicating with Japanese people, or having essentialized ideas about Japanese society. After all, Beth kept a positive attitude towards Japanese people and society after this difficult experience.

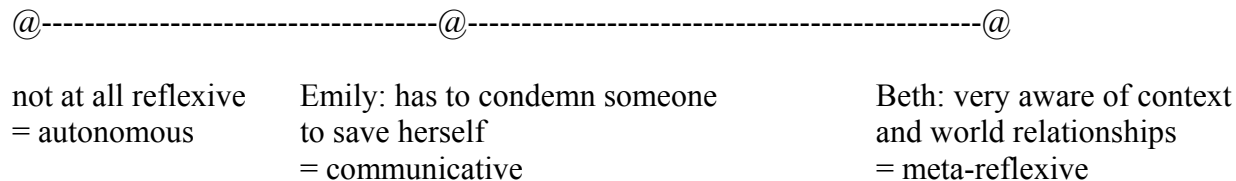
Discussion and Implication

I presented the initial findings of Beth's otaku narrative and third gender narrative at the Annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies (QUIG) in January 2005. I discuss the findings based on the questions the audience asked me at the conference. One anime researcher pointed out that the lack of discussion of the term "otaku" between U.S. anime fans and Japanese people might be the reason for problems such as fear of being stereotyped. I agree with this point. Yes, there is a lack of discussion. I am aware that some anime fans use the term otaku to empower themselves in the same manner that the term, "queer" is used in queer theory (Butler, 1993). However, the problem is that there is a strong negative implication and history of

the term, *otaku*, in the general public of Japanese society. And its negative impact is larger than U.S. anime fans might imagine. Once U.S. anime fans present themselves as *otaku* without establishing any personal relationships with Japanese people, it could be difficult to have a decent conversation because they might face strong rejection. If a hard-core U.S. anime fan says, “I don’t want to deal with such people who have negative ideas about *otaku*,” I have nothing to suggest. However, I deal with JFL students who are interested in Japanese popular culture. The negative implication of *otaku* often cuts off a potential relationship between anime fans and others. In the case of a new exchange student, a JFL student studying in Japan from another country, this student might waste their study abroad experience. Having more discussion on *otaku* is one way of spreading an unessentialized view of *otaku* although it cannot be applied to other problematic situations of social hegemonies that Beth faced in Japan.

The key to Beth’s success is her use of agency as a meta-reflexive being. The findings of Beth’s *otaku* narrative suggests that Beth selectively chose when to show her social identity as a JPC fan, avoiding being labeled as *otaku*. In the third gender narrative, Beth, being in a marginalized position as a woman from the U.S. in Japan, kept her agency as a meta-reflexive being. Somebody like Beth, a white, middle class woman from the U.S., stands out in Japanese society as “*gaijin/gaikokujin*” (a foreigner/foreign person), especially in places like a small town in Shikoku. It is not easy to hide gender identity and ethnic identity in Beth’s case. Instead of staying in a marginalized position according to the orders of discourse of Japan, Beth subverted her ascriptive identity in both narratives. Beth challenged the stereotypical view of *otaku* and of an “American” woman in given situations.

Figure 21. Different modes of reflexivity



Compared to the other JFL students, Beth has the clearest idea about keeping her agency and critical stance in any situation. Figure 21 shows examples of different modes of reflexivity (Archer, 2003). As Archer (2003) suggests, autonomous reflexive beings are not at all reflexive. A communicative reflexive being is someone who understands things through other people's agreement. Without consulting with others, the communicative being cannot be sure about his/her opinion. Emily in my pilot study portrayed an example of a communicative reflexive being in the context of a discussion of being an anime fan. Emily felt ridiculed and looked down on by her dorm friends, who were sorority girls. Once Emily found her affinity group of anime fans, she was assured that it was okay to be viewed as "weird" by others, although she kept condemning sorority girls to save herself. In contrast to Emily's case, Beth was very aware of social context and world relationships without consulting with others. Beth was beyond reflexive; rather, she was meta-reflexive, remaining aware of social hegemony and keeping her critical stance. Beth did not give in to social norms, although she managed to be flexible with people who had essentialized ideas. Both Emily and Beth's cases are examples of situational uses of reflexivity; situations which create different reflexivity and identities. If Emily has an opportunity to go to Japan, it will be difficult for her to think within the contextual continuity of U.S. society because she is unfamiliar with social situations in Japan. Being in a foreign country creates opportunities for using forced meta-reflexivity. Thus, the concept of meta-reflexivity is useful in foreign language education.

Now, what shall we call JFL learners like Beth? I suggest a new term, “Nihon otaku” (“Japan” otaku). By Nihon otaku, I mean people who have knowledge and enthusiasm about various aspects of Japan. The term, *otaku* is not intended to dismiss; instead it is intended to gain power. In Japanese society, the meaning of otaku has been shifting and empowering people. In America, some students do not feel comfortable being called “otaku” because it implies that their interest is limited to only a small area. I’m not suggesting that “otaku” or “anime otaku” be applied in any negative ways. I am suggesting an alternative term for people who feel stereotyped by it. In my project, Sean from the pilot study, and Beth from this chapter are highly successful JFL students who have knowledge and interest in anime, video games, manga, Japanese literature, art, history, and language. If these students want to separate themselves from “people who are just interested in anime and think that’s all Japan has to offer” (Beth’s interview), calling themselves “Nihon otaku” (Japan otaku) might be one option. Two students in my pilot study, Emily and Ted, accept being otaku. They seem to use otaku to empower themselves just as queer theorists use the term “queer” as a way of empowering themselves. In a way, there are many otaku people everywhere even in U.S. society. College professors and Ph.D. candidates, including myself, are all types of otaku since we have knowledge and pursue greater understanding of a specific area of study. Without otaku, companies and colleges could not function anymore. To be otaku, and to continue to be enthusiastic about learning in that subject might be the ultimate goal of learning. As a Japanese instructor, I wish many of my students to be Nihon otaku. Now JFL teachers don’t need to feel puzzled when we hear the term “otaku” from students. We can promote “Nihon otaku” as a positive goal of JFL learning. Here are some suggested discourses for your future encounter with the term “otaku”:

Japanese person: Oh, you are singing many anime songs.

Are you... anime otaku?

JFL student: Well, I like anime but I'm not anime otaku.

I prefer to be called "Nihon otaku" since I like many areas of Japanese culture, not just anime.

If someone tries to stereotype your friends (this is more likely, because people who think that otaku is bad wouldn't ask you if you are otaku, or not directly, unless they are trying to be rude):

Japanese person: Does your friend... happen to be otaku?

JFL students: Interesting. Actually s/he is more like "Nihon otaku" since s/he wants to know many aspects of Japan, not just anime or one limited area.

As a JFL teacher and an educational researcher, I have a dilemma. There are two sides to take for my students in the U.S. On one hand, I am happy to see some students who have a strong connection to Japanese culture and society through their interest in anime or other Japanese popular culture. I would like to encourage them to explore more in JPC areas as well as other cultural aspects without denying their identity. On the other hand, I do not wish any JFL students to think that anime is the only thing that Japan has to offer, as Beth commented in the interview. Accepting the idea of Nihon otaku, teachers can encourage JFL students to explore multiple aspects of Japanese culture other than JPC. I also feel that I need to help students to be prepared to use their agency efficiently in unexpected situations using meta-reflexivity. In order to help students develop their reflexivity, students and teachers need to be aware of overgeneralization and stereotypes in social hegemonies while paying attention to the diversity of the U.S. and Japanese societies. Talking about the multiple ways of being otaku is a way of cultivating meta-reflexivity in everyone.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The language use of JFL students who are interested in Japanese popular culture illustrates their inhabitable identities that often differ from ascriptive identities. In other words, their subjective understanding of their own identity may differ from how they look to other people. Some JFL students actively select when to present what identity to whom whether it is recognized by others or not. JFL students become aware that their experience with JFL learning and Japanese popular culture provide them with interaction tools that make it possible for them to think and act outside the social norms in the U.S. In this chapter, I summarize the findings and discussions in the previous chapters and return to my original research questions to discuss how my study has answered them. The two research questions are as follows:

- 1) How do JFL students narrate their identities as Japanese popular culture fans in diverse social situations?
- 2) How do JFL students narrate their critical stance on both Japanese and U.S. societies?

I also offer educational implications and suggestions for JFL teachers in the U.S., followed by possible directions for future research and curriculum.

Summary of the Findings

Self-othering

Discursive practice of self-othering (Coupland, 1999) in terms of U.S. social norms, gender, and sexual orientation are salient throughout the data. In chapter 4, I discussed a shared affective stance that JFL learners displayed in their language use: accepting being different and wanting to be different from white, middle-class social norms in the U.S. Although JFL students who are interested in Japanese popular culture discursively distance themselves from the white,

middle-class U.S. mentality, they did not want to be considered antisocial. Instead, some JFL students want to make their identity visible in order to signal their affiliation and to challenge people who don't belong to their affinity group (as discussed in chapter 5).

Representation of gender

In chapter 5, I argued that, in the students' talk, visual kei offers an alternative gender representation within JPC, parallel to the "metrosexual" identity term coined in the English language media. David finds visual kei fashion sophisticated and uses it to express himself, while Meg, Lucy, and Kate find the metrosexuality in visual kei attractive. JFL students feel frustrated with the "Americanization" of anime exemplified in the guy-guy relationship in *Sailor Moon*. The alternative centering institution, Japanese popular culture, operates as an institutional validation for JFL students' positive identity contributions. And it allows JFL students to have tools: to open up their identity options, to challenge social hegemony in the U.S., and to tolerate differences.

Meta-reflexivity

In chapter 6, I investigated Beth's personal storytelling of problematic experiences focusing on form/function relationships. Beth's narrative illustrates how she was aware of the different functions of the term "otaku" in Japanese and U.S. societies. In Beth's third gender narrative, there is a tension between being a woman and being "American" in Japanese society. Beth's meta-reflexive use of agency in different social contexts illustrates that she selectively framed her identity and negotiated it at the same time that she challenged the social hegemony. Understanding the situational use of reflexivity, it is helpful for language learners to be able to use meta-reflexivity in unfamiliar social situations, especially in a foreign country.

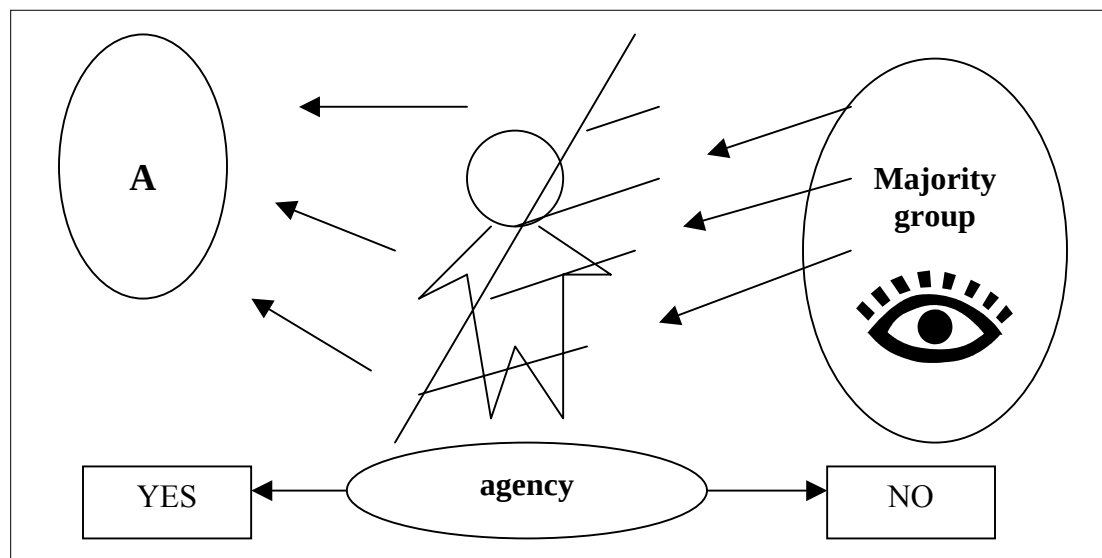
Theoretical Discussion

Research question 1: How do JFL students narrate their identities as Japanese popular culture fans in diverse social situations?

The use of language mediates social practices and identity displays in reciprocal ways. Social practices such as learning Japanese, watching anime, following visual kei, give tools for JFL learners to explore alternative representation of self outside of social norms in the U.S. JFL learner identity has been developed not just from attending classes, but also from exploring the world of Japanese popular culture through the talk in the interview and the discussion meetings.

JFL students' discursive practice of self-othering is one example of the interrelationship of language, identities, and social practices. In my study, JFL students who grew up in the U.S. illustrated their strong connection with an affinity group. Instead of homogenization (Coupland 1999; Pennycook, 1998), JFL students discursively distanced themselves from their ethnic or racial groups and illustrated the common ground with the researcher, who was Japanese. The members of affinity groups (Gee, 2002) actively participate and share what they are interested in within this community of their own free will. JFL learners display their identities according to their interest and strategic use of agency depending on the given situations that are not necessarily bounded with their ethnic and racial identities. Japanese language learning is one way to display their challenging stance towards white, middle-class social norms in the U.S. Figure 22 illustrates the discursive process of displaying their identity in given social situations.

Figure 22. Individual identity display



In figure 22, “A” indicates affiliations and affinity groups that JFL students show that they belong to in their talk. Using individual agency, students choose to show their certain identity to either or both sides, affinity group side and majority group side. Depending on what students’ concerns are, their display of identity and social activities change. For example, David wanted to be honest about his interest in visual kei inspired fashion, so he chose to express himself through the social action of dressing a certain way. While David actively shows his inhabitable identity using his individual agency to signal his affiliation with visual kei, he also challenges his ascriptive identity. Kate also shows her inhabitable identity as a visual kei fan by wearing distinctive makeup and dying her hair. On the other hand, Beth uses her meta-reflexivity to select when to show her identity as an anime fan. Beth successfully negotiates her identity showing that she wanted to be different in the U.S. society, but avoids being viewed as otaku in Japanese society.

The way JFL students display their individual identities as Japanese popular culture fans is different for each student in given situations. However, analyzing their discourses revealed

that Japanese popular culture encourages JFL students to think outside their social norms, especially regarding gender and sexuality.

Research question 2: How do JFL students narrate their critical stance towards both Japanese and U.S. societies?

In understanding anime's extension in the U.S., it is dangerous to assume that all JFL students who like anime are anime otaku. Because of the lack of diverse representation of gender and sexuality in U.S. animation, the social practices of watching anime and discussing it mediate between displaying their stance against the white, middle-class U.S. mentality and challenging it at the same time. Without analyzing students' language use, I might have only looked at them in terms of their ascriptive identities.

Interestingly, JFL students in my study shared their critical stance towards U.S. culture and society while some JFL students who lived in Japan in Yamaguchi's study (2004) indicated their negative view of Japanese culture and society. Now, I need to point out that the strong connection of affinity group sometimes overcomes the connection of national background. JFL students showed their stronger affiliation with Japanese popular culture than with their ethnic identities in my study. Beth, who played the role of discussion leader, might have set a positive stance towards Japanese culture and society in discussion group meetings. The biggest difference in my study from Yamaguchi's is that students who were interested in Japanese popular culture participated. Furthermore, the students in my study, except Beth, were at the beginning level, in the first two years of their Japanese study, while Yamaguchi's participants were third or fourth year JFL learners. In my study, all the students seemed to be aware of diverse opinions in the U.S. while they seemed to be reluctant to be critical about Japanese social issues. I suspect this is because of their lack of experience in Japan. I am interested in investigating if JFL students'

critical stance towards Japan changes as they have more personal experiences in Japan in the future.

Social identity shifts according to all the combinations of situational dimensions for JFL learners, including the time of their lives (Ochs, 1996). JFL students in my study ranged from 19 to 25 years old. These students might lose their interest in Japanese popular culture when they get older. What will happen to the critical stance they showed in their dialogues after they lose their interest in Japanese popular culture and Japanese learning? Not all JFL students continue to study Japanese, so they might easily forget their language skills. However, the critical thinking habits they develop are unlikely to go away completely. These are habits of thinking within a multicultural society that foreign language teachers need to help students to develop.

Now, how can we apply these ideas to practice? The most important thing that we can do in everyday life is to ask questions that are taken for granted. For example, gay human rights are relatively protected by law in the U.S. However, the representation of homosexuality in animation on TV is restricted. Why do these types of contradictions exist? Asking questions and discussing with others are something all of us can do on a personal level to make changes in the future.

Educational Implications

For educators and teachers, I have five suggestions that follow directly from the findings and discussions of this study and my ongoing work as a Japanese teacher and researcher.

1. Strive for culturally relevant pedagogy in classrooms

Discourse analysis in this study informed me about JFL students' perspectives on Japanese popular culture in the U.S. This study made it clear that popular culture from a different

society helps raise awareness of multiculturalism. When teachers introduce a Japanese term, we need to connect it with its social norms and history in Japanese society.

2. Be aware of students' multiple identities

People in general selectively show their identity in different social practices. In Japanese classrooms, what kind of individual social identity do JFL students display? From the JFL learners who participated in this study, I became aware of the multiple layers of students' identity displays. Just taking time to sit down and talk about their interest in Japanese popular culture and their social activities helped me deconstruct my image of anime students. In cross cultural communication, it is often difficult to see the gap between inhabitable identities and ascriptive identities. One important aspect of learning a foreign language is to be able to accept those who appear to be different from you and to think outside your own bias towards different culture and societies. Interviewing and communicating with students for this study gave me opportunities to sit down and talk about them. I strongly believe that communication is a key to understanding students and creating rapport in classrooms. Analyzing JFL students' talk also taught me alternative ways of understanding how language learning and Japanese popular culture mediate my students' identities.

3. Have a critical discussion

Having a critical discussion is one important aspect of media literacy and multiliteracies. The time when Japanese teachers were treated as the sole information source on Japanese culture is over. In this postmodern society, JFL students have access to a vast amount of information about Japan according to their interests. What is needed now is the opportunity to discuss social issues with a critical approach (Kubota, 2002). Does every Japanese program offer students an opportunity to discuss social issues with a critical approach? In South University, where there are

about 250 JFL learners, students who major in Japanese can take classes such as Japanese literature, East Asian films, East Asian religions, and Japanese history, in addition to language classes. However, there is no course where students can learn about the social and cultural issues in contemporary Japan with a critical approach. Many students who major in Japanese study abroad, but not every student has this opportunity. This situation produces a major problem: there is a wide range of language ability as well as cultural knowledge in the upper-level classes. Developing critical thinking skills helps students be aware of their own essentialist view—not only about other cultures and societies, but also about U.S. culture and society. When we teach JFL students about Japanese society and culture, we need to include race, class, gender, sexual orientation and current social issues both to represent Japan more broadly, and to help students be critically aware of the complexity of any nation-state.

4. Guide students towards “Nihon otaku”

I suggest that teachers guide JFL students towards “Nihon otaku.” (fans and enthusiasts of Japan). This is an ultimate goal for JFL learners who have deep social, cultural and linguistic knowledge of Japan. I emphasize the importance of encouraging language learners to be active learners instead of passive ones in order to be Nihon otaku. JFL learners who have a strong interest in specific Japanese cultural aspects have created more learning opportunities for themselves than students who have no specific interest in Japanese culture. However, there are some JFL learners who are only interested in a certain cultural aspect, such as video games. I have tried different strategies such as assigning students to conduct individual cultural presentations and “show and tell” in Japanese. By listening to what other students are interested in, JFL students have opportunities to seek out different aspects of Japanese culture on their own. The teacher’s job is to help JFL learners expand their areas of interest and deepen their

knowledge, since it is impossible for teachers to teach students every single cultural aspect of Japan.

5. Consider successful learning as becoming meta-reflexive

What defines a successful learner? In classrooms, some students are successful in keeping good grades throughout the school year. However, I have met some students who were incapable of applying their knowledge in practice outside the classroom. Although some students seem to be succeeding within the classroom settings, they are not successful language learners in the long term. Our job as language teachers is to prepare our students to be active learners who are flexible and capable of dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, successful learners are capable of being their own agent in unknown social and cultural situations in their own society as well as in the society of the target language. Students who are in a privileged group can be oppressed without having the meta-awareness in different situations. Learning does not take place only in classrooms. Language learning is a life-long process.

Implications for Further Study

I propose that Japanese programs include a popular culture course for all JFL students about race, class, gender, and social issues in contemporary Japan. In response to the growing interest in Japanese popular culture and vast amounts of information about Japan available through the Internet and media, I strongly feel the need for a course to discuss critical aspects of Japanese society. This course would provide students who plan to study in Japan with a better understanding of what to expect. It also would provide vital information for students who do not have opportunities to study abroad. The purpose of this course would not be to teach one way of understanding Japanese culture and society, but rather to question social norms in both U.S. and Japanese societies and to challenge them. For example, I showed a part of the film, *Lost in*

Translation in the discussion group and had students translate it into English. JFL students exchanged their opinions about social issues in Japan that were portrayed in the film by comparing them with social problems in the U.S. We talked about issues of gender representations, language use, being a foreigner, race, and media based on watching one film. Having a critical discussion using popular culture texts will help students develop their awareness and meta-reflexivity in different situations in the future.

For further study, I am interested in following two of the participants, Meg and Anna, who are leaving for Japan in September 2005 for the one-year study abroad. I am planning to investigate how JFL students develop their identities, literacy skills, and critical stance through on-line community activities while they live in Japan, as a longitudinal study. I am also interested in investigating the preparation and ongoing support provided by U.S. colleges, instructors, peers, and their Japanese friends for their study abroad. This study will provide teachers with vital information about what strategies JFL students use in communicating in Japan, in order to help teachers to support students better in and outside the classroom in the future.

I have read some newspaper articles discussing some concerns about the rapid growth of the numbers of people who learn Chinese as a foreign language in the U.S. Yes, Japan is no longer at the top of economic growth. It is true that many business-oriented students have begun taking Chinese instead of Japanese or taking Chinese and Japanese at the same time at South University. I have pointed out in the Wall Street Journal article (Parker, 2004) the shifting demographics of JFL learners—from business-oriented students in the late 80s and early 90s to anime and popular culture fans in the late 90s and now. What will happen to JFL learners in ten years? Some K-12 Japanese programs in the U.S. have switched to Spanish and Chinese already. Are Japanese classes going to disappear? I do not think the popularity of learning JFL will

diminish in the next ten years. However, after that, I think the popularity of Japanese as an additional language will depend on what educators provide for JFL learners. Japanese teachers need to make an effort to provide courses that meet students' needs and expectations. The attractiveness of Japanese culture now is in large part due to the coexistence of traditional and contemporary cultural aspects. I strongly believe that keeping a good balance of teaching traditional and contemporary cultures is important. Closely examining JFL students' discourses, I became more aware of the power of popular culture in the global community. The culturally engaging language courses are the key to serving students from postmodern generations. It is necessary to reform some existing Japanese studies programs and Asian studies programs in this transitional period. I hope my dissertation is a step towards this reform.

In a film review of *Lost in Translation*, Minear makes an interesting comment about the multiple aspects of culture, "It is Japan, one of a thousand Japans; it *isn't* the Japan anyone should mistake for *the* Japan, if such a thing exists" (Minear, 2004). For teachers of less commonly taught languages, this is a significant point to remember as we help students to experience and think critically about the multiple "Japans" through language learning.

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6. What are some reasons why you spent time with Japanese popular culture texts?
- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. I didn't spend time | e. Because I was bored |
| b. because I wanted to do | f. Because someone made me |
| c. To relax/calm down | g. For my own pleasure/enjoyment |
| d. To find out something/learn something | h. Because I couldn't sleep |
| e. Because I heard about something that sounded interesting | |